JUNIA

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A NOVEL

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'ESTELLE RUSSELL,' 'THE PRIVATE LIFE OF GALILEO,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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CHAPTER I.

An hour later the three men stood on the steps of the Palazzo Vecchio. Through the densely-packed, patient crowd, Tuscan courtesy had opened a way for the infirm old man, who leaned on the arms of his grandson, and of Signor Paolo. Long they stood in silence, gazing at the bright lines of party-coloured light converging towards the Piazza as to a common centre, and at the waving to and fro of the anxious crowd. Paolo's thoughts, as he stood there, were very bitter, but Carlo's were very sweet. The Marchese, to the surprise of both, all at once began to speak of domestic matters.

"This is a great change," he said. "It will be well for us too to change with the times. Carlo, I have been thinking—but there was so much else that was more important, that it always slipped from me before I spoke—I have been thinking that it will be well now to hire two men-servants. See about it to-morrow. Summer is coming, and I shall like to have my chair wheeled round the garden."

"But I can do that, as I did last summer. Is it not always a pleasure for me to do any little service for you?" said Carlo, who was surprised at the speech, knowing as he did his grandfather's parsimonious habits, and morbid shrinking from strange faces — a shrinking which had increased by being indulged in for so many years.

"Nay, there is better work in store for you, my Carlo," said the old man. "You must be a voice—a voice to teach the nation. Get me two stout lackeys, do you hear? What! Now we need no longer fear spies about our bed-chamber, and domiciliary visits at midnight. *Viva la libertà!*"

"It shall be as you please, sir," said Carlo.

"Listen!" the old man cried, lifting up his hand as the clocks began to strike midnight. "Listen! The beginning of a new day—an epoch in the world's history—the sealing of a compact with liberty!"

The crowd swayed to and fro. Those in front heard the words and passed them to those behind. A chorus of applauding voices cried, "He says well—very well. *Viva*, old Falconieri! *Coraggio*, Falconieri! you have worked for this, and so have we, eh?"

Suddenly the little balcony in the façade of the Palazzo was lit up and filled with dark figures — men who had been watching and waiting more anxiously than the crowd in the Piazza. A thrill ran through the people; a sea of faces was instantly upturned in breathless silence, while a loud voice from the balcony announced the result of Tuscany's universal suffrage:—

"The total number of votes polled in Tuscany—three hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred and forty-five.

"Rejected votes—four thousand nine hundred and forty-nine.

"Votes for a separate kingdom—fourteen thousand nine hundred and thirty-five.

"Votes for the Union—three hundred and sixty-six thousand five hundred and sixty-one."

A silence for the space of a long-drawn breath followed the announcement; then the cry rose: "Long live the Union! Long live our free Italy! Long live our King, the Honest Man!"

So cried the crowd in its frenzied joy; while banners waved, rockets blazed, and bands struck up the hymn of freedom.

On the steps of the Palazzo the three men clasped hands. Even Paolo's ill-humour was appeased; the compromise which put back the republic into Utopia was half forgiven for a moment. Yes, the people had a mind for monarchy to-night, no doubt. "As for to-morrow, we shall see—we shall see," said Signor Paolo.

The Marchese uncovered his head. "God,

who has remembered us, remember Rome! remember Venice! remember Perugia!"

"Hear the good old man!" cried the bystanders. "Right, Falconieri! *Viva!*"

"Carlino shall be our deputy."

"He has no nonsense in him; what he says is as plain as a pike-staff."

"It is true. Eh, Falconieri, these are fine times! No more *codini*, eh?"

"*Viva* Carlino, the people's deputy!"

The Marchese took off his hat and bowed. He cleared his throat, and would have made a little speech. "Friends," he cried, "I would say two words to you." But another voice cried, "There is Bettino! (Ricasoli). Make Bettino speak to us!" And the popular tide receded in the direction the minister was supposed to have taken.

The Marchese put on his hat, a little disappointed. Carlo said, carelessly, "You see, dear grandfather, I am not even the idol of the hour; only the idol of an idle moment. I am not a voice in the nation yet."

"Patience, patience," said the Marchese.

"Yet I would have liked to thank them for the kind way in which they spoke of you. Surely they might have listened for one moment."

"You must forgive them for their scant courtesy," said Carlo, who did not like that the old man should feel slighted. "At any other moment they would be glad enough to listen. But just now the whole city has gone out of its senses with joy. I myself seem somewhat changed from what I was an hour ago. My blood runs quicker; my eyes have an unwonted keenness of vision. I seem to see Italy a queen among nations."

"True, Carlo, true. We might kneel down and thank God for this—we who were slaves! Yes, my old blood runs quick too. This seems the beginning of a new life. Surely the kingdom of God, which I have been dreaming of, is come nigh to us!"

They drove slowly back to Casa Falconieri. Everywhere shone lamps, and candles, and tricoloured transparencies. The people's fiat had gone forth, and there was light. Light in garrets, in cellars; rivers and domes in a blaze; the very hillsides lit up as with ten million fire-flies.

"Carlo," said the Marchese, as their carriage stopped before the iron gateway over which hung the Falconieri shield, "there is some gilding wanted here. See that it is done—to-morrow. We must do away with cobwebs and mustiness; we must renew our youth."

"It shall be seen to," said Carlo.

"Yet another thing," the old man said, as he stopped to rest, half-way on the stairs. "Now that Tuscany is clear of the Austrians, Casa Falconieri must live. It had not been worth while else. But now! Carlo, thou shalt take to thyself a wife, and build up the ancient house. It is not well that Italy—free Italy—should lack sons and daughters. Dost hear me, Carlo?"

"I hear, grandfather," said Carlo, to whom the old man's speech had brought an unaccustomed stirring of the pulses, quite different to that excited by the *vivas* of the crowd.

"We will speak of it to-morrow," said the

Marchese. "I must think—I must think. I knew men in my youth, and since. But since 'Forty-eight I have so withdrawn myself!—*Basta*, we will find a wife for thee somewhere, my Carlo—a wife fit to mate with a Falconieri!"

"To-morrow, grandfather, as you say," Carlo replied. "There is no hurry; and you are too much tired to talk more now."

He helped his grandfather to bed, the old man again reminding him that two stout lackeys must be got for all such menial services hereafter. Carlo left the house afterwards. He was engaged to spend the small hours with a joyous band of youthful patriots, who, since the events of 'Fifty-nine, had formed themselves into a debating society. But he did not join them immediately; he walked up and down Lung'arno, communing with his own thoughts. What should he say to his grandfather to-morrow? How should he make him understand that he must seek his wife himself, and that she was not in Florence? Now that his dreams were within the possibility of becoming reality, he felt conscious how Quixotic he would appear; how vain and shadowy his love for the English girl to whom he had never spoken a word of love. He felt how unsatisfactory the answers he had to give would prove to his grandfather, even supposing he should not altogether forbid his marriage with a foreigner. Where was she? He knew not. Had he any sign of her love to him? Not one. To go forth to seek for this wife was indeed a shadowy undertaking. Yet Carlo felt that it was an undertaking to be fulfilled before he could settle down to the business of life. He was seized all at once with impatience; he who had been waiting very patiently for so long. He joined his companions at last, but their merriment jarred upon him: the speeches, and songs, and choruses seemed empty noise and froth to-night; and for the first time, when called on for a speech, he found his tongue unready, and his thoughts far away.

The dawn was breaking, and worshippers were hastening to the first Mass, when Carlo let himself in. He intended to lie down and sleep for an hour, and be ready to meet the Marchese at the morning meal, when he would doubtless again bring forward the subject of his marriage. Carlo had been as yet able to think of no argument that should convince his grandfather, except the argument that all his thoughts and desires were turned towards Junia. Perhaps some happy inspiration would come to him during the hour of sleep, which should show him how to overthrow an old man's views of mere expediency. Expediency which, to the old and experienced, merely means making the best of the material at hand, sounds very much like a crime to the enthusiastic young man who has grown up from boyhood with a lofty ideal. And Junia was that ideal to Carlo. A most beautiful woman, always kind, always encouraging; never sarcastic, never pitiless, like her clever little sister Anna, of whose sharpness and cleverness he had been very much afraid when a boy. Junia was the one to whom he believed he could always confide his thoughts; even his most secret thoughts. That desire of being perfectly understood which his grandfather had stigmatised as the desire of a fool, Carlo still cherished *in petto*: not ashamed of it, only feeling that the time was not come yet—that he must wait.

And now the time was come. He was going to test this airy fabric he had built out of his dreams. A word, and it would prove substantial, or it would vanish for ever into the region of dreams.

As he was passing quietly to his room, Signora Isabella stood before him. He exclaimed on seeing her; but she signed to him to be silent, whispering, "I have been waiting to speak to you an hour and more. The Marchese has asked for a priest."

"A priest!" Carlo exclaimed, shuddering. For the priest's shadow in a house is an evil omen. Death comes after him and tarries not. "A priest!" he repeated. "And he was so well—so animated, last night!"

The signora shook her head. “ I would not alarm you, but I did not like it. Such an old man as he is now——”

“ But it cannot be—he cannot be going to die yet,” said Carlo, hurrying to his grandfather’s bed-chamber.

CHAPTER II.

The Marchese's bed-chamber was beyond the room in which he was accustomed to sit. The door was open, and Carlo was able to see the old man as he lay in bed in his usual attitude. There seemed no adequate cause for alarm; the face he saw was as the face he had always seen ever since he remembered anything. Signor Paolo in his dressing-gown stood in the middle of the room, speaking vehemently.

"A priest! after years of protest against that rotten system which puts barriers between the people and God; is it you—you—who now prove false to yourself? false to the cause of freedom? Signor Marchese, are you in your right mind?"

"Ay, ay, so I think," said the old man, without the slightest irritation.

Carlo rushed forward. “Dear grandfather, you are not ill! Never mind the priest. You do not really want him.”

“I am not ill,” said the old man, smiling. “Nay, I am very well; yet I think the time has come, my boy. I have lived so much lately, seest thou? This last eleven months has seemed eleven years. Ay, ay, I know what I want. I am in my right mind, never fear.”

Signor Paolo spoke again. “I am grieved to the heart at this thing you are going to do. I am not grieved that you should say your time is come; for you have done work for Italy, for Humanity, and your work will live, and your name will be blessed hereafter. Nor does it grieve me that you should depart before me, for it is according to the law of nature, and I know that my work is not half done. No! as an apostle of that new faith which will replace an effete and tottering creed, I deplore from the depth of my soul this retrogression—this falling back on a lying system from which I had hoped that you were emancipated.”

"Ay, ay, Paolo," the Marchese replied. "The priests are all rogues and rascals; who knows it as well as I? But Christianity will serve my turn, and the turn of many who come after me. I cannot reform the Church; I must take what she gives."

"Christianity! Call it superstition! call it cowardice!" said Signor Paolo, leaving the room. Carlo went after him.

"Why do you speak in that way to my grandfather?" he said. "It is neither right nor kind. What if this about the priest be an old man's whim? As an old man's whim let it be respected. If he wishes to make his peace with God in the old way—in the way hallowed by all old and dear traditions—what is that to you?"

"I must speak the truth without respect of persons;" was the answer. "I take Heaven to witness the anguish it causes me. Had this defection in the face of the last enemy, death, been that of a woman—my wife, say—I had not wondered. Had it been you who played the coward, I had expected it. But that he—the man who seemed to have shaken off the chains of the Roman hierarchy—who for years had been the disciple of the religion of Progress——"

"Ah, Paolo!" said Carlo, sorrowfully, "if his foreboding be true, he is going where progress and retrogression are perhaps only empty names. O Paolo, what do we all know about it? What if the old man's eyes are enlightened? Paolo, what do we know?" he repeated, earnestly.

Signor Paolo made a gesture of despair. "What do the priests know? answer that." Then changing his tone, "My Carlo, we cannot understand each other, and we never shall. It is enough. I have protested; but I have no heart to enter into controversies."

He walked away just as Nunziata entered, bringing the parish priest. It was a solemn moment for Carlo, when his grandfather's door was shut behind this man, and he was left without. Now, for the first time, the supremacy of the Roman hierarchy came home to him. This man, whose name he actually did not know, was at this instant, by mere virtue of his office, as effectual a barrier between Carlo and his only relative as though walls of brass interposed between them.

No long interval elapsed between the priest's visit and his departure, only to return with the Host. When Carlo knelt he found Signora Isabella at his side. The sound of the priest's bell had attracted the gardeners from their work. They, with Nunziata, and one or two women who had straggled in, unrepelled on such an occasion by the porter, knelt a little way from Carlo. When the short ceremony was over, to the surprise of all, the Marchese raised himself up, and spoke in a loud distinct voice—

"Signor Parroco, remain one moment. I have a few words to say. Where is Paolo? Where are my people? Let them all enter—all in the house."

Carlo, wondering, signed to those present to come nearer, and went to seek Signor Paolo, who had shut himself up, grieving, in his study.

When all were assembled the Marchese spoke—

"He"—indicating the priest—"tells me I have made a good confession. He has given me absolution, and says I may die in peace. He"—pointing to Signor Paolo—"tells me I have done good work for Italy, for Humanity. He will not grieve for my departure; and I—my work is done—and I may depart in peace. Priest and philosopher both tell the same tale. Miserable counsellors both! I know my work; I know what I have been, now, when I and my work are parting company; and I can see it with eyes that are opening.

"Listen, all of you. This is an old man's confession.

"I have always been peacefully disposed. But, when I was young, I was intended for the priesthood; so let early training, not free choice, have the credit—or the shame—of that.

"I have given my goods to feed the exiles, as Paolo knows. Good. But I was soft-hearted, and could not help it. What credit shall I have for that? I have left charitable legacies to certain objects, which will somewhat impoverish my grandson, who, I trust, will not curse me for it. He" — pointing to the priest with what seemed grim irony— "says that is much to my credit. We shall see—we shall see!"

The priest shuffled from one foot to the other. The monologue was taking a strange turn: was the old man mad? He moved towards the door, intending to slip out quietly. The Marchese continued—

"I have been guilty many times of cowardice. I have shrunk from sacrifices all my life. I have been quick to see, slow to act. I have loved my ease—calling it peacefulness—better than my country. Because of that I have clung to the *status quo*, and have followed the middle paths, and have refused heroic undertakings. I believed that the kingdom of God was afar off, and I slept and dreamt of it, and tried but feebly to bring it nigh. I have cringed to the strong, and indolence whispered that it was resignation. Therefore, though I have watched through Italy's night, the dawn is not for me. Old things are passing away, and I with them. I leave you with this last word. Evil is here to be fought against; not to exact our submission. Fight against it, else you will be saints in the devil's calendar."

Long before the conclusion of the Marchese's speech, the Parroco had slipped away with his train, feeling it much safer so to do. For the man who had made his confession in all due form, and who had declared the existence of certain charitable bequests—and the Church is always lenient to such—was talking most heretically, spite of the blessed *viaticum* which he had just swallowed. For "Italy," "Humanity," were words which to utter was rank heresy then.

Signor Paolo and his wife retired in silence. "There is a strange mixture of cowardice and heroism in the man," he said to her when they reached their own rooms. "He might do something for Italy yet, there is so much good stuff in him. But the Falconieri were always full of crotchets and strange whims; a little touched, perhaps, in the upper storey."

"I cannot bear his talking in that way, as if it were not meritorious his having given so much money for years to help our exiles; and as if charity to hospitals and such things were no good. At that rate one might as well be a selfish wretch and do no good works at all!" said the signora.

When the crowd was gone Carlo sent for the principal physicians of the city. "What is the good?" said the old man. "The fees will be better in your pocket than in theirs. Everything will be yours soon."

But Carlo sent for them, and was rewarded by their favourable opinion. They said, one and all, that the Marchese's constitution was excellent; that the events which had excited him would give him a new lease of life rather than put an end to it. "We shall see," the old man said, when Carlo repeated this to him.

That night when Carlo went to bed he softly left open the door of his room. He would have lain down in his grandfather's room, but the Marchese forbade it.

"Only cowards fear to die alone," he said; and Carlo felt himself shrink at the stern words. Not so would he desire to die; but with a kind arm round him, and a woman's kiss on his brow.

At midnight, between waking and sleeping, he was roused by a loud cry: "Carlo, I am dying!"

He ran in. The Marchese lay with his arms stretched out as though he would have repulsed an unseen foe. He was dead.

CHAPTER III.

Thus in the midst of rejoicing the old Florentine passed away, scarcely missed, scarcely mourned by any save the few dwellers under the roof of Casa Falconieri. But a little while, and Casa Falconieri must put on a new face; the King of the new Italy was coming; mourning robes and sad faces and blank windows were no fit welcome for him. Carlo felt that no observance of private sorrow must be obtruded on such a triumphal day. No Piedmontese busy-body glancing at a dumb, unadorned façade, must be able to whisper into the ear of king or minister the hateful word "*Codino.*" So, old hangings and banners were disinterred from the chests in which they had lain for years, and new ones were bought, and *carte blanche* was given to an artist in illuminations. Signora Isabella ran up and down, and helped with a zeal which Signor Paolo advised her to keep for a more worthy occasion.

"If the dear Signor Marchese—rest his soul!—had ordered all himself," said the signora, as she stood on one side to observe the effect of a certain window decoration, "nothing could have been better done. Perhaps he can see it from where he is. Who knows?"

"Who knows?" repeated Carlo.

They were standing together in one of the rooms on the first floor. Since the Beringtons' departure many tenants had come and gone—Russian princesses and generals, and French counts and barons, and British widow ladies with bevies of pink-cheeked daughters. From one and all the old Marchese had held himself aloof. His only dealings with them had been to sign the receipts for rent presented by old Nanni—who, after the Berringtons' departure, combined the office of steward with that of head-gardener — with unfailing regularity every month, and to finger and test the roll of *scudi* brought back by that old retainer. The last tenant, a lady of Austrian tendencies, had gone away in disgust at the unheard-of turn events were taking; and Carlo, for the first time since the break-up of the Berrington household, trod the stately rooms in which the happiest days of his boyhood had been spent.

"Strange, that people whom we loved so dearly should have passed so completely beyond our ken!" said Signora Isabella, as she and Carlo walked together through the reception rooms where workmen were busy fixing rows of seats to temporary *estrades* close to the windows. "It is as though they were all dead."

"*Che, che!*" said Carlo, hastily. "Why should they be all dead? I have always had a sort of prophetic instinct that June would turn out gloriously. I shall go to London soon and find him a great English painter. Perhaps he will be too great a man to speak to me!"

"You know that is nonsense," said the signora. "Wherever June is, be sure he will be glad to see an old friend. And wherever he is, Junia will not be far off. As to his success—though I wish him well, poor fellow!—how many promise and don't perform!"

"You are getting as cynical as Signor Paolo," Carlo retorted. "June could never fail as long as Junia was by to spur him on."

The signora smiled. "That sounds very pretty," she said; "but the man who requires such a spur is a poor sort of man in my opinion."

All the windows were draped, and the garlands fixed in their places. The gardener's boys were bringing baskets of white and red flowers and laurel-leaves ready to be showered down on the approach of the royal procession. Carriage after carriage was driving up, containing such of Carlo's acquaintance as did not themselves possess houses in the line of thoroughfare by which the King would proceed to the Duomo. Signor Paolo had already betaken himself to the pavilion at the farthest end of the garden, bidding his wife tell him as soon as the noise and fuss were over. Carlo, with a nervous dread of his responsibilities as a host creeping over him, mingled with the new, and in every respect pleasurable sense of mastership, was welcoming one group after the other, and trying his best to make small-talk to the ladies, when Nanni shambled up and twitched him by the sleeve, beckoning him aside.

"It is an English lady," he whispered in Carlo's ear; "a very rich one—ah, very rich —who wishes to know whether she may have a window, or part of a window, to see the procession."

"A window! Why did you not say this was a private house? What were you thinking of, Nanni? Pray go and say so now," said Carlo, turning haughtily on his heel.

Nanni caught him again by the sleeve as he turned away. "But she says she will pay well. And she only wants three places; only three! And why should your lordship be put to all this expense without a *crazia* of return? It is pitiable," said Nanni, conscious of having a heavy retaining-fee in his pocket.

"My good Nanni, you know my wishes. Attend to them," said Carlo.

Nanni went away looking foolish. Carlo went up-stairs with some new arrivals, who thought the view would be best from the upper windows. Nanni presently followed, bearing a number of glib excuses (his own manufacture) from the English lady for having made the mistake of offering to hire the Signor Marchese's private windows. "Now," she asked, "would the Signor Marchese of his courtesy let her and her companions occupy three places, so that they might not altogether miss the sight?"

"What is all this about?" said Signora Isabella, coming forward.

Nanni recapitulated, adding, "They have come all the way from Paris on purpose for the sight; and now it seems there is not a window to be had in Florence for love or money. One lady is nearly crying."

"Crying, eh?" Carlo laughed.

Nanni hailed this as a good omen. "It would be a pity to disappoint the women, eh, your lordship? To come all the way from Paris, across the mountains and the sea, *per Bacco!* that is something."

"What is to be done?" said Carlo, looking at the signora.

"Let them have seats, poor things," said she, unwilling that any woman should be disappointed on such a day as this.

Carlo considered for a moment. Then he said, "Give them three seats in the second row in the outer drawing-room. One does not wish to be discourteous. Still, one's Italian friends have a right to the best seats to-day. Nanni, let it be made quite clear that this is a pure courtesy, that it was not to be had for payment. I will not have you take even a *buona mano*." He walked away as he spoke the last words.

Nanni whispered the signora, "Thanks, thanks a thousand times. It was your word that gained his consent. You shall never want for fresh lemons from the garden, signora. I shall feel honoured by your asking for them." Then with a sign, as of some mysterious understanding between himself and the signora, he hurried down-stairs to the vestibule of the first floor, where the applicants for places had been (figuratively) kicking their heels while the negotiation was being carried on. Nanni opened the door and beckoned mysteriously. "I have had the greatest trouble, ladies—the greatest trouble," he began; but was instantly cut short by Miss Stubbes, who, dressed in black, with a yellow rose in her bonnet, marched up to the staircase with the military aspect of the cathedral ex-beadle—Austrian to the backbone.

"Signora!" Nanni began again, then stopped, fascinated beyond the power of speech, and only able to point significantly to the yellow rose on the top of Miss Stubbes's head. Miss Stubbes, however, proceeded onwards, shouldering her parasol as though it were a mace.

"Now, gardener, remember this! Three good seats we have paid for, and three good seats we mean to have. I am no stranger to Florence, so you need not try to cheat *me.* What is the man making faces at?"

"Signora, signora, for pity's sake," Nanni faltered, pointing to the yellow rose. "*Ohimè! ohimè!* And she says she knows Florence! Signora, you must know that 'tis as much as my place is worth to let you go up-stairs with *that* on you," he said, in a terror-stricken whisper.

"There now, Willy, I told you so," said Mrs Kinnaird, reproachfully. "It is very unkind of you. Why should you persist in wearing a yellow rose just to hurt the people's feelings, when a red rose would look just as nice in your bonnet, and displease nobody?"

"Who thinks of the dear Grand Duke's feelings to-day?" Miss Stubbes inquired, loftily.

"But he is not here to see, so his feelings won't be hurt. I'd take that thing out if I were you. I would indeed, Willy."

Fresh steps sounded behind them; more carriages were setting down at the gate. With the courage of despair Nanni beckoned

Miss Stubbes and Mrs Kinnaird to follow him quickly. At all hazards, thought Nanni, he must get this pestilent *codina* (whose *scudi* were in his pocket) seated with her back to the room and her face to the street before any new-comer had time to get up-stairs and spy out that yellow rose in her bonnet.

"*Diamine!* who would have supposed that a yellow rose would see the light on such a day as this?" said Nanni aside, as he marshalled the ladies to the places assigned them by Carlo.

"How well I remember this sweet room!" said Mrs Kinnaird to her cousin.

"Now, gardener," said Miss Stubbes, briskly, "three front seats, remember. Don't pretend you don't understand. You understood well enough while I was paying for them."

"Certainly, signora—certainly," said Nanni, pressing forwards. "I have done my best. I told your ladyships beforehand that I could do no more. Here are the places the Signor Padrone said you could have. Pray sit down, your ladyships. You will find these seats all that can be desired. They are worth—ah!—worth twice as much as your ladyships have paid for them. I will send your ladyships a basket of flowers immediately. The garden has been ransacked; you should just see it; not a camellia left!"

"Stop!" cried Miss Stubbes, as Nanni was hastening away. "I call this a disgraceful imposition," she said, pointing to the front seats, which were all occupied.

"It is too bad. You were paid for front seats; you know you were," said Mrs Kinnaird. "My pretty bonnet won't be seen, and it is the right colour. And Leicester will be so cross! He said he didn't care to see the procession at all unless he could secure a front seat."

"Leicester might have come away from Paris a day earlier if he was so particular about his seat. It is all his fault," snapped Miss Stubbes.

"If your ladyships would but try the seats," said Nanni, who felt that all was gained if he could persuade them to sit down. But Miss

Stubbes had paid her money, and was determined to have her money's worth.

"If I don't get the seat I paid for, I'll have my money back," she said, loud and decided. And instantly all eyes were turned on her and on the yellow rose in her bonnet.

"I am not going to be stuck up there. Come, Conny, let us see if there is a vacant window in the next room." And Miss Stubbes walked on, regardless of the pantomime of looks, and shrugs, and signs carried on by Nanni and the spectators. Severe were the judgments pronounced on the woman who could wear a yellow rose on such a day as this.

"Eh, your lordships," said Nanni, "she is mad, mad. *Pazienza!* She must have her will."

But Miss Stubbes had heard nothing. With a seven-leagued stride she had cleared the space between the outer and the inner drawing-room. "Conny, here are seats!" she exclaimed. "Make haste!"

"What is this about the strangers paying for seats?" said some one.

"Eh, your lordships all," said Nanni, tapping his head, "they are mad, mad—all mad. If the Signor Padrone wants to turn them out, *per Bacco*, he himself will have to do it." And with this explanation Nanni departed, with the triumphant consciousness that one honest man at least was all the better for the young padrone's obstinate refusal to accept payment for the seats.

Mrs Kinnaird had no sooner taken possession of her seat than she began to fidget and wonder where her husband was. "And, I daresay, he has forgotten my flag. He always does forget everything, somehow."

"There he is, and he *has* forgotten the flag," said Miss Stubbes, as the offender entered.

Mrs Kinnaird gave a little sigh of disappointment. Miss Stubbes gave a little grunt of satisfaction. These were the consequences of Constantia's despising her advice, and not taking Leicester in hand at once, and letting him see that she would stand no nonsense. If she had spoken to Constantia once, she had spoken a hundred times. "Remember things!

Do you suppose that such a man as Leicester ever could remember anything except himself?" Miss Stubbes said in a half-whisper as he approached. Mrs Kinnaird left off fidgeting and made room for him beside herself.

"We have had many a nice waltz down this room, haven't we, Leicester?" she said. Kinnaird, who was staring up at the ceiling and pulling out his whisker, made no reply. Presently he said in an absent way,—"Did you speak?"

"It was nothing—nothing particular. Leicester, would it not be nice to have these rooms next winter?"

"Haven't thought about it."

"Might I not ask whether they are to let?"

"You can ask if you like."

"These," said Miss Stubbes, magisterially, "are the best reception-rooms in Florence. I always said that poor Mrs Berrington might thank her rooms for making her parties go off so well. If you receive, and wish to have your receptions well attended, by all means secure these rooms. Of course, to *me* it is a matter of no consequence where you are, as I shall not be with you. I merely advise you, that is all."

"No, old girl, you won't be with us,—not if I know it," Leicester muttered to himself. He made up his mind at once that he would not rent the rooms. Partly because of Willy's advice, partly because the rooms called up associations which were not agreeable.

The morning wore on. Twelve o'clock had sounded from the Campanile, and the guns from the fortress had told of the King's departure from Leghorn. Two hours more must elapse before Florence could be reached. Kinnaird sat and yawned till he was tired, and then went down into the street to smoke a cigarette. Many people strolled into the garden, where an impromptu refection of ices and lemonade was served to beguile the time.

Nanni had taken the Signora Isabella into his confidence to a certain extent; to the extent, that is, of a *buona mano* having been offered and accepted, and of Nanni having seen, too late, the yellow rose which betrayed the *codina*. During the period of waiting, the signora descended to the drawing-room floor to see with her own eyes the yellow rose and the wearer of it. Watching by a reserve basket of flowers at the door, Nanni saw her, after a little hesitation, enter into conversation with the English ladies. Perhaps, then, the yellow rose was not so much of a *codina* after all; else, surely, the signora would not stand there speaking.

Yet Nanni was not entirely satisfied. Half the pleasure he felt in his good morning's work was destroyed when he thought of the wicked wastefulness of the young Marchese. His grandfather—good soul—would never have let the *scudi* slip from his hands like that! It was an ancient Florentine maxim that if a thing was worth having, it was worth paying for. Nanni saw afar off, as he believed, the consequences of casting aside a maxim so respectable and so eminently safe. The young Marchese would be ruined — yes, ruined; and nobody would be the better for it—not even Nanni.

To those who had not quitted their seats it seemed as if the strain of expectation could be no longer borne, before the booming of the guns told Florence and Val d'Arno of the King's arrival. At that welcome sound vacant seats were quickly filled, and garden boys came running with fresh baskets of red and white camellias. Signora Isabella ran up-stairs to her own window. She had great news for Carlo. But that must wait a while. Shouts of welcome were rising and filling the air, the tiptoe of expectation was reached, and all eyes were turned to Porta-a-Prato, whence the royal procession was to emerge.

Shading her eyes with her hand, Signora Isabella had just made out to her own satisfaction the central figure in the brilliant group of horsemen riding slowly, but nearer every instant. She had taken her basket of flowers in her hand,—Nanni, standing at the kitchen window had called to her to be ready,—when a shriek rose from the drawing-room windows beneath, mingled with cries of "*Codini!* Turn them out!" from the street.

Signora Isabella looked down, let her basket drop to the street, and with a cry of dismay ran down-stairs to the drawing-room where the English ladies were seated. Nanni, too, had looked down, and had let his flowers fall with an imprecation. He just saw a long black pennon (as it seemed) hanging over the yellow window drapery. He looked not a second time, but rushed down-stairs and hid himself in the toolhouse at the farthest end of the garden, cursing the Austrians, the *codini*, and the mad Englishwoman, under his breath.

In the drawing-room the commotion was at its height when Signora Isabella entered. Miss Stubbes, brandishing her parasol, was demanding the restoration of her property, and compensation for the damage it had received. What had appeared like a pennon, as viewed by Nanni from above, and by the gazers from the street, turned out to be Miss Stubbes's black silk mantle, trimmed with lace. It lay on the floor, rent in two, and Mrs Kinnaird was crying out, " O Willy, what could possess you to do such a thing ? " Then, seeing the signora with whom she had shortly before been speaking, she ran to her, entreating her to pacify the disturbance. "Say it was an accident; say she didn't know. Oh, you dear good creature, say anything. Why did the Padrone put yellow hangings up to-day? Willy would never have thought of it else. Yellow and black, you know. It is as much his fault as any one's. Why weren't the hangings all red? Oh dear, dear, tell them I'm not a *codina.* I'm—what do you call it—all for Italy. Look at my bonnet. Now, isn't my bonnet the right thing? And I had a flag, too—such a beauty—with silk cord and tassels, that I was going to hang out, only my husband forgot it. Oh, please, do tell them; do explain everything."

"Conny, you are making a great fool of yourself," said Miss Stubbes. "I tell you I don't care; and I'd do it again, as soon as not. A free country indeed!"

But Constantia gave a hysterical sob, and became more foolish. "O Leicester!" she cried, as her husband entered—"Leicester, where have you been?"

"Down in the street. Got between two

national guards. Saw the whole thing quite comfortably. Wish now I hadn't stopped up here waiting so long. What's all the row been about? People yelling like cats."

"O Leicester, it is not my fault." And Mrs Kinnaird began a tearful explanation.

"Very well," said Kinnaird, as soon as he understood what had occurred. Then, turning to Miss Stubbes, he said, politely, "Under the circumstances, I think it will be best for us to part company at once, Miss Stubbes. I have no wish to get into trouble with the police on your account."

"As you please. I'm sure it's the same to me," said Miss Stubbes, who firmly believed that she had made a grand demonstration in a righteous cause. Witness the mantle torn in two!

"O Willy!" said Mrs Kinnaird, tearfully, as her husband led her away. They were beyond the doorway when the signora spied out Carlo, and ran up to him, saying, "Speak to her before she goes, Carlo. She is a friend of the Berringtons. She has seen Junia."

CHAPTER IV.

When Leicester and his wife, and all the wedding-guests were gone, Junia felt as if one more of the waves of this troublesome world had passed over her, leaving her high on a desolate shore, with a clear view of a dry, barren country beyond. It was some satisfaction to her to know (as she believed) that of such waves there could be but one in a lifetime. She felt that she had gained a great insight into the realities of life, and that the last vestige of youthful illusion had departed. The age of love, like the age of miracles, was past; she had entered on prosaic middle-age, she who had just passed her teens. It seemed to her that she was a very old woman, and quite experienced, now that she could remember with a smile of scorn a certain night when she had cried herself to sleep, thinking how different life might have been had Kinnaird loved her truly. "But all men are liars," thought Junia; "and there is no such thing in the world as love, for poor people like me." If she could meet with any one like her brother June, she thought she might change her opinion. But then, again, thought Junia, there was but one June in the world.

She was alone for some time — except for the company of Molly and Percy — for the family went to London after the wedding. She was very quiet, and the children were quite good and obedient, when a message came from Mrs Percy Smith which turned everything in the schoolroom upside down, and excited even Junia. The governess and the children were to come up to London for a short time, and they were to set out the day after the message came, and telegraph by what train they were coming. The letter which contained these directions was dated from a house which Mr Percy Smith had lately bought in Grosvenor Square, and which Junia knew to be just opposite to her uncle's house. Anna, too, was in London. She had lately got a new situation with which she was pleased, and she had a salary which was in accordance with her experience and attainments. She had advised Junia to try for a new situation and ask for a higher salary; but Junia could not bear the idea of leaving Molly. Anna was one who never allowed herself to be swayed by any such ideas.

Junia was busy preparing for the morrow's journey, when a card was brought to her by the schoolroom-maid on which she read "Carlo dei Falconieri." She ran down-stairs to the schoolroom—most women would have stopped to smooth their hair—she took both his hands, crying, "How good of you to come and see me! How good it is to see a friendly face, to speak Italian again! Tell me of Florence, Carlo—of yourself, of everything!"

Carlo had rehearsed to himself innumerable speeches, and figured to himself a thousand times what she would say and how she would look; and now the great moment was come, nothing but the most commonplace words were forthcoming to his tongue. He was taken aback: he had expected something quite different from such a meeting as this. He could not say to himself that he was disappointed at Junia's warm welcome. But he was taken aback because he had not expected such warmth. He could not at once make up his mind whether it augured well or ill for him. Then, again, her face was different. She was very beautiful; yet Carlo thought he would have preferred her to have looked exactly the same as she had the last time he saw her. But as he sat and talked, the difference vanished, and the face seemed to change back into that which he had known formerly. The course of the conversation, too, was calculated to encourage even a very bashful man. He said, in answer to her eager questioning about the house, "I am so glad you have not forgotten the old place."

"Forgotten it!" exclaimed Junia. "Did the Jews in their captivity forget Zion? No more can I forget Florence. I love every stone of it so, that I think I shall haunt it when I die."

"You would like to go back?" said Carlo, delighted at her enthusiasm. For besides the pleasure every Florentine feels at a foreigner's appreciation of his beloved city, there was the additional pleasure of recognising exactly the Junia of former days in this speech.

"Can you ask?" said Junia. "Though you were so much with us, Carlo, yet you can never understand how happy I was in Florence—how happy we all were. There the wheels of our daily life ran so smoothly, with never a clog, never a jar. We seemed to live in such an atmosphere of love! If I have a castle in the air, it is that some day I and June may go back and live in our old home."

"The home shall be yours whenever you choose to claim it," said Carlo, earnestly.

"It is good of you to say so. It is but a dream, an air castle, as I said. I don't know how I came to speak of it, even to such an old friend as you."

"You don't know how happy you make me by telling me of it," said Carlo.

As the schoolroom - maid entered with the tea-tray, Carlo rose reluctantly. It seemed to him that he had but just begun to ask questions about June, about the rest of the family. Mrs Kinnaird had indeed told him that June was in Canada, but Canada presented no other idea to Carlo's mind than that of a country of the western hemisphere, principally peopled by English folk.

"O Carlo!" Junia exclaimed as he stood up to take leave of her, "you seem to have been here just five minutes!"

"I might say the same, Junia. But I may come again and see you, may I not?"

"I don't know," said Junia; and Carlo was much astonished at such a speech. Then she said, "Don't go till I come back," and ran out of the room.

Mrs Anderson was cook and housekeeper during the absence of the upper servants. To her Junia went and put the case before her. Might she, without danger of giving offence to Mrs Percy Smith, ask her old friend to stay to the schoolroom tea?

"I never did such a thing before, and I might never do it again, I have so few friends," said Junia. "Of course Mrs Percy Smith is very particular; but do you think she would mind just this once? Especially as he is a nobleman—a man of very old family—besides being an old friend of mine."

"A nobleman? A lord, I s'pose. What kind of a one?" asked Mrs Anderson.

"A marquis," said Junia, feeling rather ashamed at having to proclaim Carlo's title, even for the pleasure of an hour of his society.

"A marquis!" Missus wouldn't object to he, you may be sure, miss," said Mrs Anderson. "There's master, though; you might ask him to make sure. He came in an hour ago, and had luncheon in the morning-room. He's on his way travelling somewhere, as usual. He was in the greenhouse just now, smoking."

Junia hesitated, reluctant at asking a favour of a person with whom she scarcely felt herself on speaking terms. Mr Percy Smith was oftener away than not. It had happened perhaps half-a-dozen times during her sojourn at Nunehead that she had been asked by him at luncheon, "Do you like beef underdone, Miss Berrington?" To which she had always replied, "No, thank you;" and there her dealings with the head of the house had begun and ended.

"La! you needn't mind asking master. He's as good-natured as—— specially after he's had his victuals. Shall I go and ask him for 'ee?"

Junia plucked up her courage at this and went into the greenhouse. She knew, as a matter of fact, that the whole household would rather ask a favour of the master than of the mistress. Handsome, sleek, and *débonnaire*, the master took things easily himself, and wished other people to do the same.

"Certainly, Miss Berrington. Make your friend comfortable," was the reply. Junia waited an instant, expecting to be questioned.

Mrs Percy Smith would most assuredly have asked many questions; would perhaps have chosen to satisfy herself by ocular proof that the person whom the governess called "Marchese" was a fit person to sit down and drink tea with her Molly and her Percy. But Mr Percy Smith smoked on and asked no questions, and Junia ran back to the schoolroom, her cheeks all aglow with pleasure.

"You must stay and take tea, Carlo," she cried. "So put down your hat and let us have some more about Florence and old times. You must tell me about yourself, too," she added.

Carlo put down his hat with alacrity. The children, who had been staring at him, approached to take their seats. Molly, who had made out in her own mind that he was a great friend of her dear Miss Berrington, dragged a chair up to the table for him, and gave a private order to the maid for a pot of strawberry-jam.

"I have not tasted tea since I was in your drawing-room," said Carlo.

"Ah, you were at our last party, just before that sad break-up," said Junia, with a sigh. "I remember it well."

"Forgive me," said Carlo, reddening. For he thought of the scene on the balcony, when the Englishman, who was married now, had made love to Junia. "It was very stupid of me to remind you of it."

"Never mind," she said; for she was thinking of her father's death. "I would rather take the bitter than not have the sweet. And it is very sweet to know that those we loved truly loved us truly, and were worthy of all our love. When we know that, it does not seem as if death could separate us. You must feel thus, Carlo, whenever you think of your grandfather."

"Yes, indeed; I understand you, Junia. And I feel just the same."

"How well I remember that night!" she said, with a smile, that had just a shadow of sorrow in it. "You played Beethoven like one possessed, Carlo."

"Some day, if you will let me, I will tell you what possessed me," he said.

" Yes, do," she answered. Then Molly interrupted, in an aggrieved tone—

" Berry, won't you please talk English ? I do want so much to know what you have been talking so fast about all this while."

Junia, of course, could not talk of anything that interested herself alone before such a little pitcher as Molly. She, however, began good-naturedly to speak English, to please the child ; and Percy, who had stared in silence as long as the conversation was carried on in an unknown language, became communicative, and informed Carlo that he had a pony, and that he was to leave it behind when they went to London.

" Our governess is coming too," said the child, with an infantile rendering of his mother's tone. " And Molly is going to ask papa to let her go and see the dancing-dogs when we go. And the carriage is coming round after breakfast to take us to the train."

" And who takes care of you ? " asked Carlo.

" She does," said the child, with a jerk of the head towards the end of the table where Junia sat.

“But who takes care of her?” said Carlo.

“No—she takes care of us,” the child repeated.

Junia had to explain, to Carlo’s astonished ears, that it was quite a usual thing in England for persons as young, or younger than herself, to take long journeys unprotected.

“If I were a rich young lady, I suppose I should travel with my maid,” she said; “but as I am not, I travel with these children. Another time I might travel alone, as thousands of women, better born and better bred than I am, have done.”

This was such new doctrine that Carlo could not receive it. In his own country no peasant-girl would wish to travel the shortest distance from home by herself. It seemed to him a terrible thing that such a beautiful person as Junia should travel without a *chaperon*. It was the custom of the country, and it might be a very good custom for the ugly women; but for the beautiful women there ought to be more observance. When Carlo took his leave, which was not before he had made sure which train would take them to London, he had made up his mind that, for once at least, Junia should travel as privately as if she were a rich young lady. The next morning he was waiting at the station when the carriage from Nunehead drew up. He offered his arm to Junia as she alighted, and told her he had engaged a carriage for her and the children.

Junia looked blankly at him. "A whole carriage! But, Carlo, I have only money to pay my own and the children's fares. You have made a mistake."

"No, no, no—all right," said Carlo. "And that is your maid? *Per Bacco!* she is younger than you. I don't understand it at all."

"Nor do I," said Junia; "and I wish you would explain."

But a porter had already taken out all the rugs and bags from the carriage, and placed them in a compartment which was ticketed "engaged;" and the children had jumped in, and were calling Miss Berrington.

"Come, Junia," said Carlo; "all is paid for. This is yours till the end of the journey."

"Carlo," said Junia, reddening, "I have a mind to be very angry with you. You had no right to do this."

"Dearest Junia," said Carlo, humbly, "be as angry as you will—only come. Believe that the only right I claim is the right which may belong to a friend of your brother June."

"Yes; but still it was wrong of you to do this. However, I suppose you must be forgiven, as you know no better," she said, as she stepped in.

But she was in truth very angry. Carlo was very happy; he had gained his point—she was travelling like a rich lady. That reflection served very well for the first few miles of the journey. But when he found that Junia did not talk, nor even look as she had looked the day before, when he found that she coldly refused his offers of refreshment at a station where there was a buffet—offers which the children and the maid were quite ready to accept—then Carlo began to feel that he had done wrong in some way, and that Junia was punishing him for it. As for Junia, she was so vexed that she could have cried. That any one should have ventured to hint that she was less protected than she ought to have been was almost an unpardonable offence. Even though she told herself that Carlo's blunder was excusable on account of his nationality, she did not know how to forgive him. It seemed to her that she could never again feel quite comfortable in his society. He had set himself up as her censor, and they could no longer maintain that frank intercourse which belongs to friends and equals. She thawed a little—a very little—towards the end of the journey, and forced herself to say some trivial words to the offender, lest he should feel too much punished for his sin of ignorance. Carlo had sat in a corner of the carriage all this while, quite as miserable as he had been happy at the beginning of the journey. He was as thankful as a dog when at last she spoke. "What hotel do you go to in London?" were the words which awoke his gratitude.

"I don't know. Can you tell me of one — a nice, good one?" said Carlo, eagerly. "I suppose I shall be in London a little while."

"I don't know about London hotels, except Claridge's, where royal personages stay when they come to England *incog.*—one sees the name in the papers. But it is sure to be expensive."

"Oh, that doesn't matter! I have plenty of money," said Carlo.

Junia could not forbear smiling. The speech was so much like that of a big schoolboy. "He is very, very young," thought Junia; she must perforce forgive him. She said, "If you have a full purse, London is a very good place in which to empty it. I mean, that you can empty it with very little trouble."

"So much the better," said Carlo. "You will see how I will spend. What is the good else of having a lot of money? My grandfather spent all upon the exiles. But there are no exiles now, so I can spend fairly—without doing anybody an injustice, I mean."

"I wish you joy of it," said Junia; "only remember in future not to spend money as you have spent it this morning. If you do, I shall punish you—really—by never speaking to you again."

"Junia! have I offended you so much?" said Carlo, in dismay.

"Yes. Now you know my mind, and I have said my say. And now we will be friends again, if you like."

Carlo's protestations of grief at having offended her were made with such Italian vehemence that the maid and the children began to stare.

"Now, Carlo, say no more about that—blunder! It was but a blunder, and I have told you that I have forgiven you," said Junia. "Let us talk of something else," she continued, loftily, yet with that air of encouragement which suits a woman talking to a very inexperienced young man.

But Carlo, who was already (figuratively) grovelling in the dust before her, could not be happy without a little more humiliation. "I could throw myself on my knees to entreat you to forget that I had ever offended you, dear—dearest Junia!" And Junia was afraid that he was about to suit the action to the word.

"Don't — pray don't!" she cried, with a little nervous laugh; "it would be a nine days' wonder for the maid and the children. I should not like it at all, I assure you."

"I will do anything—anything," said Carlo, sitting back in his seat; "anything—as long as you will look at me and speak to me as kindly as you did yesterday."

"Why, I did not know you cared so much," said Junia, colouring a little.

"Not care much!—not care!" said Carlo. But by this time the train was entering Euston Station, and noise and smoke were predominant; and there was the duty of finding all the different trunks and bags, and seeing them put safely on a cab. It was done all too quickly, and nothing remained but to say Good-bye.

"When shall I see you again?" he asked, holding Junia's hand.

"I am sure I don't know," said Junia.

"May I call on you sometimes?"

"I really do not know. I am afraid not," said Junia. Then, in explanation, "I am a governess, you know, Carlo." And with that the cab drove off, leaving Carlo both astonished and disconsolate on the pavement.

"But a governess has not taken the vows, like a nun," said Carlo to himself; "and I shall call upon her."

CHAPTER V.

For one week Carlo, left to his own devices, wandered up and down London, and measured all things therein by the Florentine standard. At the end of those seven days he came to the conclusion that there was no place in the world like London; and thanked Heaven for the knowledge of the fact.

Also, that there was no place in the world like Florence; and thanked Heaven for the knowledge of that fact too.

No place like London for rags, for wretchedness, for unutterable squalor, for gin-palaces, for all ugliness — physical and architectural. And again, no place like it for splendour, for waste, for physical beauty, for cynical selfishness, side by side with a lavish outpouring of charity that made the ancient and world-famed charities of Florence seem poor and selfish in comparison. For those ancient men—his forefathers among them—gave of their world's goods to save their souls. So many acres of good land, so many fat bags of *scudi*, in exchange for more years of Paradise and less of Purgatory,—a clear bargain with the holder of the Keys up yonder—a good and fair transaction on both sides.

But these men—men who were heretics, not *Cristiani*, any more than the beasts were—who only differed from the beasts in that they had souls to be damned, which the beasts had not—so the priests said,—these men gave of their goods to feed the poor with both hands, as one might say, and without striking a bargain with St Peter. What a list of hospitals, of charities, all supported by voluntary contributions; all managed, as it seemed, by laymen—business men! And all done without hope of reward, here or hereafter! all done out of pure pity for the suffering! And the only thing these men seemed niggardly of was—their precious time! Everybody was in a hurry.

"Surely," thought Carlo, after a perusal of the 'Times' advertisement sheet, "these Protestants have found out the meaning of the word 'charity,' and we have yet to learn it. And to hear one of our preachers in a Lenten or Advent course, now, one would say that they were all the veriest brutes. My grandfather was right when he said the priests were always liars, and always would be. They can't help it, I suppose. *Pazienza!*"

But, the week over (and hardly that), Carlo began to yearn for his beloved Florence. These people had good hearts; he would willingly have stayed among them, and learnt what a foreigner could learn from all their munificent charities and the popular and scientific institutions of whose existence he was made aware by the 'Times.' But they had no sky. The clammy, foggy, murky atmosphere weighed on Carlo as it had been a mantle made of lead. When he thought of the sun he pined for Florence. What place was like it for beauty and sweetness, and universal gilding of sunshine, which made even rags and squalor picturesque. If he shut his eyes for a moment, it seemed to him that he saw Giotto's campaniles with the blue sky above. Had Junia not been in London, Carlo would have given way to his home-sickness, and have fled back to his beloved city. But he had made up his mind that when he did return Junia must be by his side; and he had been a week in London, and had not seen her again.

Daily he haunted Grosvenor Square. The days went by, one after the other, each one like the last, and still he haunted the place, hoping in vain to see Junia. At last the policeman on his afternoon beat, seeing a little well-dressed man constantly sauntering up and down, and as constantly looking up at the windows of one particular house, made a note of it. Carlo was only trying to discover which of all those windows might be Junia's! Might she not, the poor fellow thought in his ignorance, be "taking the air at her window" one day? Might he not have the happiness of seeing her and of making his bow? He did not know that Junia's window was quite on the other side, up eighty-five stairs, with a view over roofs and courts and mews. Once or twice he had the bliss of seeing her afar off, as she was entering the house with the children. When that glimpse was over, Carlo felt that the day was over, and he let himself drift, anywhere, till the morrow; always hoping that next time he might be passing close by when she went in or out, and so be able to speak to her.

Junia had written to Anna telling her of her meeting with Carlo; and Carlo had not been long in London before he got a note from Anna asking him to luncheon at Chester Terrace on a certain day by Mrs Calvert's desire. "Calvert is the name of the family I am with," Anna wrote; "and they are all very nice and kind, and will be delighted that you should come and see me." When Carlo got this note he was thrown on his beam-ends—as far as a Florentine can be said to have any beam-ends.

Here was another anomaly.

Junia, at Grosvenor Square, hesitated to receive him, as he supposed, because of some mysterious article in the social code of England; whereas Anna, in precisely the same position at Chester Terrace, could offer him hospitality in the name of the mistress of the house.

Carlo, whose prophetic instinct told him he should be sure to see Junia at Chester Terrace, remained in a fool's paradise till the day came.

It was a Thursday. Carlo was ushered into a drawing-room with open windows filled with geraniums, where Mrs Calvert, stout and smiling, good-nature personified, appeared to his inquiring eyes: also three tall Miss Calverts in muslin and sashes, who, retiring, presently brought Anna up from the schoolroom, looking just as Carlo remembered her, as delicate and dainty as a bit of Sèvres china.

But no Junia.

Junia, in her room up eighty-five weary stairs, was looking over the broad expanse of tiles, and wondering—for very dulness—whether she should see anything more of Carlo. She thought she had seen him once or twice in the distance. Yet it could hardly be.

Mrs Percy Smith in her boudoir was persuading Mr Percy Smith (in London for a few days only) to have his name put down as one of the governors of a certain benevolent Society for Governesses; because that sort of thing looked well, and was quite "the thing" now. Mr Percy Smith didn't care a hang, but would do it if she liked. If he didn't pay money out to that, he supposed he should to something else.

To return to Chester Terrace. At first, the unanimous finding of the three Miss Calverts was, that the Italian marquis was an ugly little man. Half an hour later they reversed their verdict and completely stultified themselves by pronouncing him to be a dear little man. A little afterwards, each, in her own separate inner consciousness, had decided that he would make a delightful husband for their dearest Anna. Mrs Calvert, whose lot in life had not been cast in with marquises either native or foreign, was secretly awed to hear Anna address this exotic nobleman as "Carlo," and speak familiarly of personages whose names she—Mrs Calvert—had seen in the letters of the 'Times'' Florence correspondent. "No wonder my governess has such good manners," thought Mrs Calvert, "if she grew up among such people as these. Now I hope this little man won't be wanting to marry her and carry her off to Florence, because I should never replace her."

But Mrs Calvert was too good-natured to stand in Anna's light. When Carlo took his leave he was invited to come whenever he liked. Carlo was glad enough to avail himself of the permission. He was always hoping that by some lucky chance he might meet Junia at Chester Terrace. He had not called there many times before the three Miss Calverts began to joke the governess about her Italian friend.

"We will all be your bridesmaids, dearest Anna," said the eldest, kissing her.

"And you shall be married from this house, and papa shall give you away," said the second.

"And mamma will give you your wedding-dress, I know, you darling," said the third.

"My dears," said little Anna, who instantly assumed a venerable air, "what put such nonsense into your heads? You forget that my old friend is a Roman Catholic."

"Oh!" they exclaimed together; "but you might convert him."

Anna dismissed that proposition. "I never yet heard of an Italian belonging to the higher classes turning Protestant."

"But—the Madiai," said the three Miss Calverts together.

"The Madiai!" Anna repeated, with as near an approach to a sneer as she ever permitted herself. "The Madiai had neither fortune nor position to lose. They did not become pariahs when they became Protestants. You cannot understand these things. An Italian may deride the priests and denounce the Papacy all his life long, but he clings to his Church; and the priests know that, and trade upon the knowledge."

But the three Miss Calverts still had their own opinion. What could the Marchese have been talking about, for instance, on a certain day, when they all went—a large party of them—to a flower-show in the gardens opposite? One of the girls had been walking with Anna and Carlo, and, imagining that they would be better pleased if the third did not come between, slipped away and joined her mother, like the good-natured girl she was. "I do think he is going to make dear Anna an offer," she said, laughing, to Mrs Calvert. "Well, my dear, I'm sure I hope he may," was that pleasant lady's reply.

But Carlo was talking—very fast and with great earnestness—all about Junia. He did not exactly tell Anna that he was in love with Junia; but Anna could interpret his anxiety to see her in no other way; and the discovery was to her a very pleasing one.

Anna could not herself have "put up" with Carlo on any account. He would worry the life out of her, she thought, with his feminine desire for sympathy and his Italian vivacity and sensitiveness; but Junia was of a temperament not to be worried by such things. Yes, he would just do for Junia.

"There is no law against your seeing her," said Anna. "As you say, governesses have not taken the vows like cloistered nuns. I should call, if I were you; and then, if Junia finds that the family don't approve of your going to see her, you need not call again."

Carlo went. He was determined to say, if fate would but give him the chance, what should put an end to his state of uncertainty. Romeo and Juliet were not more quick in making up their minds about each other than are the Italians of the nineteenth century. One can scarcely imagine such a thing as an Italian not being sure whether he loves a woman or not. If he knows it at all, he knows it certainly; but in this case the Juliet was an English girl. So Carlo called at Grosvenor Square with a beating heart, revolving within himself all he would say, and wondering what she would say.

But Fate was not kind. "Not at home," was the answer. And Carlo turned disconsolately away from the door where the porter and the butler were sunning themselves as they watched a carriage drive away.

Carlo crossed the road and walked slowly down by the garden railings. The butler watched the carriage round the corner, and retired to read the newspaper, placing Carlo's card on the hall table as he passed. He had not taken much notice of the little foreigner—had not indeed heard very distinctly what he said — else he would have known that his inquiry did not refer to the occupants of the resplendent equipage on its way to the Park, but to the governess who, with her two charges, was slowly descending the long flights of stairs. The butler bestowed more notice on Carlo's card than on Carlo himself. The card was indeed a noticeable thing, with its embossed coronet on top. The butler was examining it when Junia and the children passed out.

Carlo was walking slowly outside the garden railing. Should he ever see Junia? he was asking himself, vexed and moody at his failure. Three girls walked slowly by, talking confidentially. Three more sat on benches reading, chaperoned by a grave-looking elderly person, who worked. The elderly person stared at the young man standing outside the railings. She thought he was looking at the young ladies. Carlo saw neither her nor them, but stared on blankly. He was making up his mind that he would have to write to Junia. "A letter won't do half as well," he was thinking. "A letter, no matter how one may write it, always seems a poor thing compared to living speech. But what am I to do? An answer somehow or other I must have. Yes, I'll go and write to her now, and she will get it to-night."

"Now, Percy dear, walk straight, please, and don't unfurl the kite's tail till we are inside the garden," said Junia's voice behind him.

He turned; he almost ran. One minute more and the gate was shut. He called after her, "Junia! Junia!"

She turned and held out her hand.

"I was wondering how I should manage to see you again," he said, breathless with eagerness and haste.

"How do you do, Carlo?" was all she said.

Her manner was composed and cold, as it were a rebuff to his eagerness. But he went on recklessly.

"Junia, do you never have a holiday? Do you never go anywhere? Am I never to have a chance of seeing you? Are you always bound to those horrid children?"

Junia coloured. "You must not call names. It is my duty to be with them; just what I am paid for, as you know. And I am fond of them, besides. Poor little things! who would take care of them, if I did not?"

"Somebody else, of course. Anna says you are overworked and underpaid. Why do you bear it? Why do you allow yourself to be made such a slave? Anna says——"

"Anna has no right to repeat things, or to make remarks to any one about me. Good morning, Carlo." And Junia walked away, colouring with vexation. To have this young man setting himself up as her censor, as in that matter of the railway travelling, was bad enough; but to be an object of pity in his sight was intolerable, and not to be borne. She had gone a few steps, when Carlo's voice arrested her.

"Signorina Junia!"

Junia turned back. Molly turned too, and fixed a pair of terribly sharp eyes on Carlo.

"Well?" said Junia, in Italian, as she reached the gate. Her colour came and went, though her manner was still composed and cold.

"Don't be angry," said Carlo, piteously.

"Of course not," said she, with some loftiness of demeanour.

"But you are angry."

"N—no, not exactly angry; but—that is, I won't be angry with you any longer."

"I shall go mad if I don't see you now and then."

"Don't say such foolish things, Carlo. You did not go mad when we went away from Florence, years ago."

"Yes, I did."

"Were you put into San Bonifazio?" But,

in spite of the attempt at banter, her eyelids drooped, and her heart began to beat less evenly.

“No: but I nearly did go mad; I did, really. I was ill for a long time; and when I thought of you—gone, quite gone—I wished to die, Junia.”

“How could you be so foolish?” she murmured.

“I don’t wish to die now.”

“I am glad to hear that. There is plenty of work for men to do in the world. Only incapables need die.” And so she left him.

Carlo stood where he was for a moment, crushed by her rebuke. He had expected anything rather than this. If she had merely laughed at him it would have been bad enough; but to be rebuked thus, when he was trying to make her understand that she was necessary to his existence! That was hard indeed to bear. How was it possible that she, so beautiful, and so tender and gracious when she pleased, could find it in her heart to be so cold and hard to him? Even if she did not love him—and Carlo remembered the handsome married Englishman with a sudden pang—even so, she might be kinder. How many women would have looked and spoken as she did, when a man said he could have died because they were gone? But she! what a statuesque look was in her face, though her eyelids did droop! as though she had forbidden entrance to all tender emotion, for even a single instant.

Carlo walked away, feeling angry and hurt, and vexed with Junia. It was not till he had had time to cool that his vexation with her was transferred to himself. Then, after the first soreness of that stinging rebuke of hers had passed off, the words recurred to him again and again, and became to him at once a text for himself, and an interpretation of Junia's character.

"Only incapables need die."

No other woman would have spoken as she

did, perhaps. But Junia was not like other women. And though Carlo has said so to himself a hundred times, yet it came upon him now with all the force of a new discovery, at which he felt the same delight as that experienced by a connoisseur who sees a favourite picture in a new and better light.

CHAPTER VI.

"MARCHESE FALCONIERI," Mrs Percy Smith read, on her return home, as she took up Carlo's card, which lay among the rest. "The Kinnairds told him to call, of course."

Mr and Mrs Kinnaird were at Kensington, staying with the Duchess-Dowager of Kidderminster, who was a cousin of Leicester's. Mrs Kinnaird had promised to get a few nice people to leave their cards on her cousin Maria, and Mrs Percy Smith naturally supposed that the Italian marquis was one of the nice people whom her cousin Constantia had persuaded. Carlo's name was at once set down on the list for her next "At home." It was a great step to have an Italian marquis, who was a real marquis, on her visiting list. By-and-by, as Mrs Percy Smith prayed, and hoped, and trusted, she would have a real English one.

When Mrs Kinnaird was presented by the Duchess on her marriage, she had given Mrs Percy Smith some hope that in time she too might be permitted to make her curtsey before a gracious sovereign. "But, Maria," she had said, when showing her cousin her court dress, "you must be patient; you cannot expect everything at once. If I had not married Leicester, I might have lived all my life without being presented."

"But now you have been presented," said Mrs Percy Smith.

"Yes; but I have not made sure of my position with Floss. (Floss was the nickname Mr Kinnaird had bestowed on his cousin, the Duchess-Dowager.) Next year I shall be able to do more for you. But everything depends on Floss. And if Floss thought I was trying to make her take you up, your prospects would be ruined altogether, as far as getting into her set goes. I might present you myself to-morrow, but that wouldn't make Floss receive you. Floss must do it all herself. Now you understand, Maria—and you must be patient."

"I know that. But oh, Conny, if you could imagine my anxiety about Georgina! Money is all very well, but money is not everything," said Mrs Percy Smith, with a sigh. "And I want—I do want," she continued fervently—"I do want my darling Georgie to make a really good match."

"Of course; I don't doubt she will," said Mrs Kinnaird, who had no great love for the young lady in question. "As far as I am concerned, naturally, I would rather she made a good marriage than not; I would rather, for instance, that she married a man of rank than a railway contractor, or a city man, or anything in that way. But all I can say is, Maria, that you must be patient."

This had been said before Mrs Percy Smith had been long in London. When the cards of a new baronet and of a retired Indian judge, who had been lately knighted, were laid on her hall table, Mrs Percy Smith felt that her cousin was really working for her. When she saw the card of the Italian marquis, she was seized with a downright fit of gratitude to Mrs Kinnaird.

On the night of the "At home" there was to be dancing, and Carlo, in the innocence of his heart, had supposed Junia would be there, and had written to ask if he might have the first waltz. Junia was a little mystified at his note, but supposed that the Kinnairds had given him an introduction to Mrs Percy Smith. "Poor boy!" she thought, with a smile, which ended in a sigh, "he forgets that my dancing days are over." She began to remember, with something like regret, the pleasant evenings when he and she had waltzed together to try the floor before the guests arrived. A sort of tenderness for Carlo came over her—a wish to compensate him for the disappointment of learning from herself that the gaieties of Mrs Percy Smith's house were not shared by her. "I am accustomed to be disappointed about things, and have learnt not to mind," said this golden-haired philosopher to herself. "But poor Carlo!" and she sat down to write him a note. She had not intended doing what she did. It does sometimes happen that things are done which, five minutes before, the doer would have sworn in all sincerity never should be done. After telling him that she would not be present at Mrs Percy Smith's party, she continued, "But the day after, we are going to the Crystal Palace, and Anna has arranged to meet me there. Do you think you shall be disengaged? If so, you might join us. I am sure Anna would be glad."

This was the first note Carlo had ever received from Junia. It is needless to say that he kissed it rapturously, and read it a great many times before he put it away. At first he thought that he would not go to Mrs Percy Smith's party. He had that thought in his mind when he answered Junia's invitation. On Saturday he should be waiting for her at the Palace. "But as you will not be at the party, I don't see what is the good of my going. You know I only care for that waltz with you." So he wrote; and Junia laughed and blushed when she read it, and called him "foolish boy." But when the night came, Carlo dressed and went to Grosvenor Square after all. If he did not see Junia, he would be under the same roof with her. And there was something in that.

CHAPTER VII.

Junia, sitting alone in the school-room that night, was thinking her own thoughts. It happened sometimes that she spoke aloud, as only people do who lead solitary lives. She was thinking aloud now, thus: "By this time to-morrow I shall have seen Anna. I wonder if she is as pretty as ever!"

Molly and the nurse came in. "You ought to be in bed, Molly," said Junia.

But Molly exclaimed, full of excitement, "You are to get dressed, Berry. Mamma says I may stay up till twelve, and you must come down with me."

The nurse added, "And missus says you are to be sure and have your watch, miss, because Miss Molly is not to stay one minute after twelve."

Mrs Odynell was at this time laid up with an attack of rheumatic gout. For three days she had been unable to fulfil any social engagement. For three days she — and her temper — had steadily become worse. Anna, meeting Lady Crewkerne outside Swan & Edgar's, had asked after Mrs Odynell, and had been replied to very briefly, that she was far from well. After which, Gussie had passed on to her carriage with her nose in the air, and squinting horribly.

That evening Anna told Mrs Calvert she wanted to go out. At nine o'clock, just as Mrs Odynell had swallowed her fourth dose of medicine, Anna entered, with a footstep as soft as a cat's, and a tiny bunch of rare flowers in her hand.

"I hate the smell of flowers. Take them away," was all the welcome she got.

"They have no scent," said Anna, sweetly. "They are only good to look at. Dear auntie, I was so sorry to hear from Gussie that you were not well. I came to sit with you for an hour, if you like it."

"Gussie told you, eh? Why doesn't she come and sit with me herself? She neglects me shamefully — shamefully!" cried Mrs Odynell.

Anna seated herself and listened patiently to the maundering complaints which followed.

First, about the gout—its pricks and stabs and other torments, all of which were peculiar and unique. Next, about the homœopathic dog-doctor to whose care Nanine had been confided. Then about the ingratitude of servants — of Hales in particular, who wanted to leave her place to get married. "At her age she ought to be ashamed of herself," Mrs Odynell said.

"How the carriages roll!" said Anna, after a decent pause. Mrs Odynell had been meditating on the ingratitude of Hales. Her niece's remark supplied her with a new subject.

The subject was an upstart. The upstart a woman of the name of Smith, who had got a house on the other side of the square, and who was trying to get into society.

"Junia's Smiths, of course," thought Anna.

"It is said they are rich beyond anything," said Mrs Odynell. "Crewkerne declares they will be taken up by somebody before long. I believe Crewkerne said it to vex me. Gussie says she won't take them up."

"I should suppose not," said Anna, stifling a yawn.

A quarter to twelve on the other side of the square. Mrs Percy Smith is radiant. She has her hand on the arm of the retired Indian judge; she has seen the baronet speaking to her Georgina; the rooms are full to suffocation—of nobodies. Mr and Mrs Kinnaird have not appeared, though they have promised to look in for five minutes. Mrs Percy Smith has ordered Georgina to be disengaged whenever Mr Kinnaird asks her to dance, and Georgina promises obedience. The girl understands quite as well as her mother how much of her social success depends on her fame as a good dancer, and how Mr Kinnaird may make or mar that fame beforehand.

In a corner sits a white-robed figure that all men look at, but no man speaks to.

"Who is that girl with the golden hair?" they ask.

"Who is she with a face like wax, and eyes like the deep sea?"

Nobody knows.

Somebody hazards a statement.

Somebody remembers a Russian princess who always wore a high dress, even at the Tuileries. *Ergo*, this is a Russian princess.

A little man rushes up to her and bends low over her hand. They speak together in a foreign tongue. What is it? Spanish, Portuguese, Italian? Opinion is divided.

"How glad I am that I came!" says Carlo, rapturously. "I was destined to see you after all. I have not made my bow to Mrs Percy Smith yet. Do you know where she is?"

"She is in the next room, I think. But there is no getting through this crush yet."

"Meanwhile," says Carlo, "let us have a dance together—a waltz."

Junia, instead of answering, says, "What sort of weather is it? I do want it to be fine to-morrow."

"The weather is first-rate; not a cloud. It is quite a wonderful fact; but so it is. I am looking forward to to-morrow so much, that I shall not sleep a wink to-night. How good of you to ask me to come!"

"How enthusiastic you are about trifles!" says Junia.

"It is not a trifle. But promise me this next waltz."

Junia shakes her head and looks at her watch. "There will not be time. I am under orders to disappear with Molly at twelve precisely."

Carlo taps his foot impatiently. A waltz strikes up. "Now or never!" he cries.

"Oh, I don't know," says Junia, hesitating. "Ought I to leave Molly? Her mamma might not approve: no, Carlo, I had better stay where I am." But she cannot help feeling a little disappointed for herself, now. To be asked to dance and to be forced to refuse is hard, even though we be just out of our teens, and extremely philosophical.

Molly touches Junia's arm. "What is it, Berry? Is he asking you to dance?"

"She is cross and unkind and disagreeable," says Carlo to the child, in English. "I ask her to dance, Signorina Molli, and she will not."

"Oh yes, yes, Berry, dear; please dance with him for a minute, and then tell him to dance with me. I want to dance with him so much!"

Junia rises. "Just for one moment. Only one turn, Carlo, and then——"

Carlo has his arm round her waist, and they float away into the revolving crowd. He whispers, "I wish we could revolve thus—for ever!"

But she, clinging to him, neither sees nor hears; and wishes herself back safe in her corner. Her dancing days are indeed over, alas!

"Take me back, Carlo." He sees with wonder that her face is white. He gives his arm, but it is no easy thing to find the way back to Junia's corner in this crowd.

A tall footman comes up to him and says, "Mrs Percy Smith wishes to know your name, sir."

Carlo gives his name, and deposits Junia on her seat—not without struggles against the tide of dancers.

Junia, scarcely seated, rises to make way for a lady who complains of fatigue. Carlo explains that he must find her another seat, and is instantly swallowed up by the crowd.

It is past twelve. "We must go, Molly," she whispers.

"But he promised to dance with me," cries Molly.

Junia waits, watch in hand, for ten minutes; then says, inexorably, "We must go, Molly."

Molly is dragged away to bed weeping. "I knew he went and asked Georgie to dance. He has hurt my feelings, and I'll never speak to him again — never," says the unhappy Molly.

Junia, with a rush in her ears of voices and stringed instruments and carriage-wheels, lies awake and thinks sadly of the dancing days which are quite—quite over. How sweet and pleasant they were! How strange that a waltz, which once filled her with an intoxicating sense of delight, just for the whirl of it, should now only make her giddy and sick, and desirous to sit still!

"It was such fun!" she thinks, remembering how they kept it up between themselves, with such merry laughter.

But the poetry of motion is gone, and all such fun and laughter. "We must all grow old, and walk prose, and talk prose," says wise Junia to herself. "I shall never dance again, that's certain. But how pleasant it was!"

CHAPTER VIII.

It was with some little anxiety that Junia set out on the morrow for her day of modest pleasuring. Anna had entreated her to come properly dressed. "Some of the Calverts are coming with me," she had written, "and I do hope that, for my sake, you will not be a guy. You may think that it does not matter how you dress, but it will matter a great deal to me." Junia was thinking of Anna as she dressed herself, and was as much bent on pleasing her sister as some other young woman then dressing to go to the Crystal Palace may have been bent on pleasing her lover's eye. Junia's dress was all tender blue and grey, like the sky when the wind is westerly. Soft clouds of tulle floated round her face; a sprig of myosotis peeped out here and there in the airy fabric which half hid her bright wavy hair. In her face and attitude there was a little flutter of expectation. The deathly stillness of the everyday life was gone for one day; she had stepped out of the shady northern path, and had come into the sunlight of the warm south side just for this once. She was thinking of Anna mostly, but a little of Carlo too; wondering at his odd disappearance the night before. But the meeting with Anna was that which, in Junia's mind, was to make this day at the Crystal Palace a day of days.

A day of days it was to Carlo, who, with Anna, stood waiting at the entrance. Anna was looking like a charming butterfly, in spite of an infinitesimal pout, which, however, gave place to a smile of pleasure when she saw Junia.

Carlo waited patiently till the sisters' greeting was over. To look at Junia thus he would have waited days. How, he asked himself, could he have thought her hard and cold? There was nothing so melting, so tender, as this beautiful face—a thousand times more beautiful by daylight than by gaslight. They all walked on together in a flutter of expectation and explanation and delight. There was for a few moments quite a cross-fire of question and answer. Where were the Calverts? The Calverts had been kept at home by the advent of a country cousin, said Anna, with a slight blush, and a return of the infinitesimal pout. It was too ridiculous strolling about near the entrance, as if one were waiting for one's "young man." She was quite glad when she met Carlo. Then Carlo was asked as to his sudden disappearance the night before. And it seemed that the footman who had come from Mrs Percy Smith to ask his name, had returned, saying that Mrs Percy Smith had not the pleasure of his acquaintance, and requested him to leave the house instantly. Carlo, by way of vindication, had enclosed, with his compliments, the card of the master and mistress of the house, and the card for the "At home," which documents Mrs Percy Smith was doubtless at that moment—or near about—examining with more or less perturbation. Carlo had had the advantage of a few minutes' talk with Anna on the subject before Junia arrived, and was thus able to answer Junia's question in a manner that should prevent her thinking he took the slight to heart. Anna had comforted him greatly by her comments on the matter. "There is nothing to equal the insolence of the *nouveaux riches*," she had said, oracularly; "and there is nothing to equal their abjectness when they discover that they have socially overreached themselves. 'That woman Smith,' as my aunt Odynell calls her, will be ready to die of rage and mortification when she finds out what she has done. The servant no doubt made a mistake in your name. Very pardonably, for the name is Italian. I daresay she will discharge the unfortunate man on the spot. And you, Carlo," said Anna, with a twinkle of fun in her eye, "will be invited down to Nunehead Park, where, I am told, they keep it up *en prince*, and all the womenkind will make a god of you because you are a marquis. You may be as haughty and overbearing as you please in your turn—they won't mind."

"I shall not go," said Carlo.

"Oh yes, you must, if they invite you, for Junia's sake. Poor Junia will be so dreadfully vexed when she hears of the *contretemps*."

"Will she?"

"I am quite sure of it."

"Well, I am not asked yet," said Carlo. But he felt much soothed and encouraged, and somewhat pleased—though he would have thought himself above that—when Anna proceeded to simplify what she had said before respecting *nouveaux riches*, by special sneers at the offender in this particular case; who, had she been better informed, would have followed the example of a great lady, the wife of a very great man; who, when told that certain persons had been present, uninvited, at her reception, replied that she knew it—that scarcely a party was given by her that was not graced by the presence of unknown, uninvited guests. Adding, that she hoped they enjoyed themselves.

But Junia was more than vexed. She was speechless with indignation. Had any such slight happened to herself, she would have borne it as a matter of course. But to Carlo! Of course the card which Carlo had intended for her had been taken by Mrs Percy Smith as her own possession. "I think you must feel sorry you ever called on me, Carlo," she said. "I do, though I was so glad to see you when you came down to Nunehead. It seemed as if a magic wand had transported me to Florence; every fact and circumstance of my old life came back to me so distinctly —even trifles that I had forgotten."

"Do you think—even supposing I had wished not to have seen you because of this foolish thing happening—that I could wish it any longer after your saying that?"

Carlo's look was more expressive than his words. Junia did not see it, for her eyes were wet with tears of vexation; but Anna saw, and resolved if Carlo had anything more to say, she would give him an opportunity of saying it. “Keep that seat for me till I come back,” she said, after they had walked about long enough to make sitting down a natural proceeding. “I know where the buffet is, and I’ll take the children to have some buns and lemonade. You would never find your way if you went, so please stay there and keep my seat.”

Junia obeyed, it seemed so natural for Anna to manage things—Anna, who always knew where everything was, and who always had her wits about her! Junia obediently sat down on the bench, where Carlo presently found a seat beside her. She was conscious of a new feeling of embarrassment as she sat with him by her side. She thought it was because of what she had just heard; and it seemed incumbent on her to make such amends as she could for the slight which had been put on him.

The best, indeed the only amends she knew of, was to open her heart a little way to Carlo; and the only subject which lay near her heart was the welfare of her brother June. June was not so strong as he looked. The Canadian winter was very trying to one who had spent his boyhood in Italy.

"But he will not be there always," said Carlo. "You will come back to Florence, you and he—as you said."

Junia shook her head. "It was but a day-dream, as I told you then; it was merely the fruit of a vain longing. I shall never see our studio again."

"Nay, do not call the longing vain—prophetic rather."

She smiled and sighed. "Wherever June is, there my home will be—if ever he has a home."

"He ought to succeed in all he undertakes. He is a glorious fellow," said Carlo.

"Yes; I am glad to hear you say that. Yet when I have been a long while without a letter—or when I am very tired and dull—I wonder if June will ever make his fortune. Not that I could love him better," she added hastily, "were he ever so rich, than I do now that he is labouring hard for a poor man's wages."

Carlo was surprised and shocked. Was this what Anna had meant when she said once, in an off-hand way, that poor dear June was working so terribly hard, he ought to make his fortune one day? Working out in Canada had not once called up to Carlo's mind the idea of actual manual labour. Junia went on: "Everything I can save I put by, that he may have money to begin on land of his own by-and-by. But at the end of the year it comes to so little that I feel exasperated with myself. And after all, supposing he gets land of his own and succeeds with it, painting, not farming, is his true vocation. I never tell him so, nor does he say so to me; but I am sure he must feel it to be so—just as I feel it."

Carlo, looking on the ground, said with some diffidence, "What a friend may offer, a friend may accept. If you will allow me to help—that is, if June will allow an old friend to help him——"

Junia's answer was prompt.

"Oh no, Carlo, thanks. I know June's mind so well. We could not accept gifts."

"Call it a loan then. And as for payment——"

"Oh no, no, Carlino; loans are worse than gifts. Gifts are good things sometimes; but loans are always pernicious—especially to a poor man, June says."

"Only hear me out," Carlo implored, with such a strange thrill in his voice, that Junia, whose eyes were wandering off, as though June were hidden somewhere in the distance, turned to look at him.

"Junia, if I am presumptuous," he began. Then with a sudden rush of words he exclaimed, "Junia, the old house is empty. Come back and fill it, you—you and your loved ones. For I love all that belongs to you—the air you breathe, the ground you stand on. I love you, Junia."

After the rush of words came silence. It was Carlo who broke it.

"Speak to me," he cried, passionately. "Come back to Florence. Ah, I will make you happy! You shall never weep tears for me. I will be faithful; I have been faithful. Speak to me, Junia."

Junia had become red at first, but she was pale when she spoke.

"I hope—I hope to be able to think of you always as a faithful friend; you can never be anything more. I shall never marry." The last words were spoken very low, but Carlo heard them.

"What!" he cried. "Because one man has been false, will you shut your heart against me, who have loved you all these years? Boy as I was then, I loved you better than he did."

Surprise and shame were visible in Junia's face.

"How did you know?" she said, with an attempt at *hauteur* which was a failure.

"It was all by accident," he said. "And to think that you whom I adored——"

"Don't speak of it," she said, hastily, her cheeks all aflame. "It is one of those things that are neither worth speaking of nor worth remembering."

Something in her demeanour made Carlo hopeful for a moment. He whispered humbly, "At least, dear Junia, you don't love him any longer?"

Junia turned on him indignantly. "No, I am not so base!" Then changing her tone, "Forget all this, Carlo. If you remember anything about me, by-and-by, let it be that I live for one thing only in the world—for June, that is. I am June's servant; neither less nor more."

"I see how it is," said Carlo, mournfully. "I am a nobody. If I could be a hero! but I don't know how to set about anything heroic. We don't seem as if we were to have any more fighting to do in Italy. Try me, Junia. Set me a task to do, that I may win you."

Junia's eyes swam. In her mind she was contrasting this young man whom she still called a boy, with that other man who had been her first love. There was no doubt which of the two was the more manly.

"Dear Carlo," she said, "you need do nothing—become nothing that you are not now. I believe you to be good and true. What more can I say? I am June's helper. I can never be anything else. It does not seem as if I could look beyond that."

"*Oimè!* I must bear it, I suppose," said Carlo, with a groan. But when Anna came back Junia's face was quite as miserable as Carlo's. None of the party except the children were sorry when it was time to leave the Palace. When two people are miserable because the woman had said "no" instead of "yes," they are remarkably bad company for the third who plays propriety. "You have made a dreadful mess of it, I see, you dear goose," was Anna's adieu to her sister at the high-level entrance.

Junia could only make a dumb disclaimer. Her conscience told her that she had done quite right; yet she felt as she looked—very miserable; and when Carlo begged her piteously to wait till he had put Anna into her train, she had not the heart to say "no." It was the proper thing, no doubt, for a gentleman who has been refused by a lady to re-move himself instantly from her presence to the farthest ends of the earth; but Junia was not displeased at his persistent lingering by her side.

They were to get out at the Victoria terminus. "I may come with you, may I not?" said Carlo, humbly; and Junia signified that he might come, still feeling very wretched.

"But he will get over it—men always get over such things," she said to herself, by way of comfort for the unhappiness she had caused him by her refusal. She tried to rouse herself and talk to the children; but her efforts hung fire somehow, and they were all very silent till the terminus was reached, and they were standing on the platform.

Then Carlo spoke one last word: "Can nothing make you change your mind?"

She was startled, not expecting such a question. She evaded it. "Have I not said that my only object in life is to work for June?"

"You work! It is all wrong—wrong. It must be wrong that a woman should work for a man. You—you should be a queen!"

"I'd rather be June's slave than any one's queen!" she said, with something of disdain. Then she relented.

"Dear Carlo," she said, taking his hand, "you are the best fellow in the world. I do believe that you are a true friend, and that you would be—faithful—as you said. But it cannot be."

CHAPTER IX.

Late on that Saturday afternoon Mrs Percy Smith sat in her boudoir with a heavy heart. She had just made a confession, and her cousin Constantia was the confessor. On Mrs Kinnaird's lap lay Carlo's note, with its two enclosures, the "At home," and Mrs Percy Smith's visiting-card.

Mrs Percy Smith had thrown herself on her cousin's mercy, with some vague idea that by so doing she would gain instant absolution. But it appeared that Mrs Kinnaird was not in a merciful mood. As Mrs Percy Smith watched for the look of sympathy and word of comfort which were withheld, her humility gradually gave place to resentment. She had not calculated on the possibility of a change—of an infusion of sternness into her cousin's views of things, consequent on her having married Mr Kinnaird. Yet such a change there was. Good-natured Conny was trying now not to think her own vague, sleepy thoughts, but to imagine what her husband's thoughts might be, if the story of Maria's blunder ever reached his ears, and to mould her own speech accordingly. She knew by instinct—she could not for the life of her have explained why—that her husband would have very little pity for Maria. And, even setting aside her husband's opinion, she saw herself that, as regarded Maria, the task she had undertaken was almost beyond her strength. How was she to drag Maria into society, when, at the very outset, she had made herself so ridiculous? The thing was not to be done.

"Yes, Maria," she said, not harshly, but with great deliberation—"yes, you have certainly put your foot in it."

"But how was I to guess?" said Mrs Percy Smith, almost crying with vexation. "Thomas came back and told me his name was Mr Falkland. If you had been by, I should have asked your advice, of course. And as you say you know him to speak to, it would have been all right. But I never saw you all the evening."

"It was so frightfully hot that I did not attempt to get farther than the top of the stairs," said Mrs Kinnaird, unblushingly.

Habit gave her invention an air of truth, though, in point of fact, her husband had decided that there was no need of adding to the toil of Friday evening by going to the Percy Smith's crush of nobodies. But where would be the good of telling Maria that? Why should she make her feel more vexed than she was feeling already?

She took up Carlo's card and looked at it.

"I can't make out the man's calling on you, Maria, to begin with."

"He did call, nevertheless; else how should I have had his card?"

"I see. How fond Italians are of sticking their coronets everywhere! So snobbish, is it not?"

In her heart Mrs Percy Smith thought it a custom both desirable and laudable. What was the good of having a coronet unless every one knew it? That, surely, was not the sort of light one would desire to hide under a bushel. But in such a matter she did not venture to contradict the woman who was a connection by marriage of the Duchess-Dowager of Kidderminster.

"After all, Maria," and this was the first word of comfort Mrs Kinnaird uttered—"you may be thankful it was not an English marquis whom you ordered out of your house."

"Thankful! O Conny, how can you expect me to be thankful for anything? And suppose this should get wind? It might be in the 'Jackdaw' to-morrow for aught I know."

"I should not wonder if it were. Everything gets known nowadays; especially if it is a thing one would wish to be kept secret."

Mrs Percy Smith winced. "I'll leave London," she said. "I'll go down to Nunehead."

"Yes, that will be the best thing you can do."

Mrs Percy Smith began to cry. "I wouldn't mind so much were it only myself, but when I think of the chance there is of Georgina's prospects being damaged because of this!—O Conny, you don't know what a mother feels!"

"No, and I don't want to, either," said Mrs Kinnaird. "Now, Maria, don't cry. What's the good? I can't bear to see people cry." For tears are infectious, and reasons connected with her complexion forbade her following the example of the weeper. "O Maria, don't, pray don't. Have some sal-volatile. Have something, for pity's sake. Yes, I daresay you are worried. I should be worried myself if I had done such a stupid thing. And, what's more, Leicester would never have forgiven me."

"Don't tell him," pleaded Mrs Percy Smith.

"Of course not." And Mrs Kinnaird proceeded to mix just such a dose as should dry up her cousin's tears. She took a sip with the spoon as she handed it to her.

"Maria," she exclaimed, with sudden inspiration, "I'll tell you what to do. Write, and say it is all a mistake, and ask the little man to come down to Nunehead to stay there."

No sooner said than done. Carlo got the note as he was expecting the cab to take him to the tidal train. Instead of taking the train, he got into a hansom and drove off to Chester Terrace to consult with Anna.

"You must go, of course, Carlo," she said; "else it would seem as if you could not forgive the mistake. And Junia will be so glad to see you."

"I am not so sure of that," said Carlo.

"But I am. She is a great goose—and oh, so obstinate!—but I know she will be glad to see you."

"Do you think——" Carlo began, eagerly.

"You must not ask me what I think. I tell you I know she will be glad to see you."

"Dear Anna," said Carlo, and he kissed her hand gratefully, and went away feeling almost happy. Anna returned to her schoolroom smiling to herself.

It was not till Mrs Kinnaird had actually left her cousin's house that it occurred to her how it had come about that Marchese Falconieri's card should have been left on Mrs

Percy Smith. He must have known the Berringtons, of course. Mrs Kinnaird remembered all at once how eagerly he had asked for news of the family on the day that her cousin had acted so absurdly in Casa Falconieri drawing-room. He must have called on Junia Berrington, and Maria had believed the card to be for herself. But Mrs Kinnaird, clever as she felt at making the discovery, kept it nevertheless to herself. "It would only make things uncomfortable for Junia if I were to tell Maria," she thought. "There is no good in making things uncomfortable for people." She was always so busy now that she had forgotten all about Junia, whom she had wished very sincerely to befriend in some way or other when she saw her at Nunehead. "What can one do," thought poor Constantia, in self-justification, "when one lives in such a whirl? I declare I'm half tired of it already. I wish Leicester would go back to Florence, where we could be quieter."

CHAPTER X.

It is Saturday evening. There is a blaze of light in the drawing-room at Nunehead; a group of officers standing in a doorway; a group of ladies sitting on an ottoman. On a low couch Mr Pownall, the rector of the parish, sits and holds forth to Miss Kate Smith, who replies civilly and smiles occasionally — the first smiles which have graced her lips since Mrs Percy Smith gave that order which so suddenly transferred the whole family from Grosvenor Square back to Nunehead. Since that order was given, the sisters-in-law have scarcely been on speaking terms. Mrs Percy Smith is, on the whole, not sorry to let Miss Kate feel who is the mistress of the house. Miss Kate, stung to the quick by the overthrow of certain projects of her own, consequent on this mysterious Hegira from London, gives a serious thought to the rector, and endeavours to make herself believe that she should not dislike parish work. Mrs Percy Smith sitting, gorgeous as a peacock with its tail spread, smiles sweetly on the youngest officer present. The young man has been cudgelling his brains for the last quarter of an hour to find something to say, and the smile encourages him to go on. He little thinks that the handsome lady of the house is not listening to him, and that the smile is for her daughter, whom she observes at a distance in animated conversation with the Italian marquis.

Outside the drawing-room faint odours of sumptuous viands float upwards; from a distant door the aroma of coffee spreads subtly through the house. There is a faint hum of conversation mingling ever and anon with the clinking of glittering plate and matchless glass. Anderson, the gardener, who has been decorating the hall all the afternoon, steals in to see how the flower-beds look by lamplight, and goes away again.

The schoolroom door opens softly. Junia, gliding thence through a long dark passage, steps into the hall, gives a glance at the flower-beds, looks for an instant into the dining-room, and glides back again. She has had a hand in building up those wonderful bouquets, and she wants to see how the table looks when the candelabra are lighted. The dimness and dinginess of the schoolroom strike her with a chill, and she sets the door open stealthily, just a very little, that a faint echo of the warm life without may reach her. Late in the afternoon she heard Carlo's voice in the hall, and her heart has not beat quietly since. She is conscious of the perturbation, and says to herself that it is all nonsense, and she will think of something else. This is what she thinks of: On Wednesday she had met Mr Kinnaird in Grosvenor Street. She was going by with Molly and Percy as he came quickly down from the steps of a house, so that they stumbled on each other, as it were, and the children called out, "Cousin Leicester," to Junia's annoyance. Junia, with her veil down, would have passed on, neither giving nor taking sign of recognition, but he came after her, holding out his hand, with a beseeching, spaniel look in his eyes, which Junia had first learnt to know in Florence. She just touched his hand with hers; some women would not have done so much. But Junia's strong-mindedness was not of the sort which shows contempt, even to a contemptible person, in the public street.

"Junia, *carissima*," he began, almost in a whisper.

Junia stopped him short. "Good morning," she said, and passed on coldly.

She sits and thinks of this; and the false, beautiful face of the man whom she loved for a brief delicious moment rises up before her, a hateful vision. How could she have been so mistaken, so foolish? "If I had been rich," she thinks, "if I had had my father and mother and plenty of friends, he had not dared offer his hand, much less speak to me, in that way." If the Kinnairds come here, she will leave Nunehead, she thinks. She will never endure to be spoken to by that man again. "And it is all because I am poor and lonely," thinks poor Junia, hiding a burning face in her hands. "What must he think of himself, what must he think of me, to call me '*carissima*'?"

Better think of anything than this. Naturally her thoughts revert to Carlo, who loves her, and who has told her his love, now that she is poor and lonely and insignificant in the eyes of the world. She believes that he is good and true, but what an ugly nose he has! And is it not the height of foolishness to think of a man whom one has refused? In despair at her incapacity to control her thoughts this evening, Junia takes a book from the shelves and sets herself to read; no matter what, so it be something sensible. This book is extremely sensible, and may be recommended as an antidote to thoughts on rejected lovers. "Manganese is a hard, brittle metal—Junia reads, half aloud—"of greyish-white colour and granular texture, with great affinity for oxygen, and not easily fused." And so on.

Mrs Anderson peeps in at the half-open

door, and asks if she may come in. Mrs Anderson's face is red; she is just come from the culinary regions, and the fragrance of coffee and soup and gravy clings to her garments. Smiling, she pulls out a big paper-bag from an inside pocket and lays it on the table, intimating that it contains a fairing, and is her parting gift. "If you'll not mind accepting it from the likes o' me, seeing as how I'm going at last for good an' all, after thinking about it for so many years." She goes on to explain that she has bought a little house at Dittisham-on-Sea, and is going to take lodgers, if lodgers will come to her. Junia, as she listens, tries to appear pleased, but can scarcely succeed, knowing how much she will miss the smiling face and cheery greeting when next she passes the north lodge. Mrs Anderson gives a solemn invitation to Junia and Molly and Percy to drink tea at the north lodge on Monday afternoon. "You shall sit under the big tree and have crumpets and hot cake," she says, and retires with a smiling face to the servants' hall.

Junia looks at her watch. She knows she ought to be in the drawing-room, but she cannot bear to go.

In the drawing-room there is a pause. Miss Kate glances round covertly, half expecting that her sister-in-law will ask her to sing, as is usual on these occasions. But Mrs Percy Smith is going to do nothing of the kind. She sails up to her daughter. "Georgie, dearest, sing something."

Georgie stands up for an instant and looks round. "Where is Miss Berrington?" she says, in a tone of surprise, turning her superb neck like the figure in a hairdresser's shop. "Marquis, may I trouble you to ring the bell."

"Miss Berrington ought to be here," says Mrs Percy Smith, imperially.

Carlo rises; his hot Italian blood mounts to his swarthy cheek as the lady speaks.

As he rises, Junia enters and takes her place at the piano.

Somebody asks who she is. Mrs Percy Smith hears and answers—"The young person in white? Oh, that is my governess. She only comes in to play my daughter's accompaniments."

As soon as the song is finished, Carlo goes up and bows low over Junia's hand. Mrs Percy Smith and her daughter exchange glances of surprise. Miss Kate from her seat over against the dozing rector watches the blush that spreads up to Junia's forehead, and ejaculates, "Well, I never did! One would think she had never spoken to a man in her life! Such mock modesty!" says Miss Kate, with a face of profound disgust.

Molly hears, like the little pitcher that she is. "You don't know, auntie," says Molly, "that Carlo is a great friend of Berry's, and he is a great friend of mine too. I am going to Florence to pay him a visit when I am quite big."

Miss Kate pricks up her ears. "Tell me everything, Molly — everything," she says. "When did you find out that this gentleman was a great friend of the governess?"

The artless child tells all she knows.

Miss Kate listening greedily, says, disappointed, "Is that all?"

"That is all," says Molly. "And he is going to show me the place where he and Berry used to play games when they were little."

"A deep-laid plot!" Miss Kate murmurs to herself. "Oh, you artful thing!" Her indignation makes her very red, and she shakes her closed fist at the unconscious culprit.

Carlo, bending low before the governess, says in Italian, "Are you angry with me for coming?"

"No," says Junia, looking down.

"I had half a mind to come and ask for a cup of schoolroom tea this afternoon."

"I am glad you did not come. Promise me you will not come to the schoolroom as long as you are here."

"Are you really as angry as you seem to be?"

"It is not anger; I am not angry at all. But it is better that you should not come; better for me, that is. I am not a free woman here. When one says to me 'Come,' I come. When one says to me 'Go,' I go. I am a mere machine; "only my thoughts are free," says Junia, looking up with one of her old bright smiles at Carlo.

Carlo twists his moustache. He cannot understand, and he feels angry at this calm acceptance of slavery. "I believe you like your chains, else you would not keep them," he blurts out.

"How unreasonable! Just like you," says Junia.

Miss Kate comes up. "Are you going to keep possession of that piano-stool all the evening, Miss Berrington?"

Junia rises, blushing and confused. "I beg pardon. I did not know I was keeping you from the piano."

"Indeed you have been so pleasantly occupied as to be quite oblivious of what was going on around you," says Miss Kate, fumbling over some music, but keeping her eyes fixed with terrible meaning on Junia.

Is that blush the blush of innocence or guilt? Is that girl the victim of an accusing conscience or of social oppression?

Miss Kate has no doubt at all what the girl's blush means. There has never been any doubt in her mind since Molly spoke; and she intends to keep an eye on Miss Berrington's proceedings. A private eye, mind you; for her own delectation, not for Mrs Percy Smith's.

That lady, observing that her sister-in-law is fumbling over the music, comes up and frustrates her intention. "Georgie, dearest, sing that last song Signor Fantoccini taught you. It suits your voice so well. Will you move away, Kate?"

Kate, full of silent wrath, moves away, and the governess resumes the seat from which she has just been ejected. Carlo stands ready to turn over leaves; and Junia, who wishes he would go away, in her nervousness puts her finger on a wrong note.

"Do mind what you are about!" says the daughter of the house.

Carlo's face is a study could she but see it. Mingled emotions prevail in that young man's mind. Next to hearing his lady-love spoken to in such tones of asperity, is the pain of hearing his native tongue atrociously pronounced. Consequently this Saturday evening, which has not been very pleasant for Junia, has been an evening of martyrdom for this young man.

"Are you not going to sing?" he says, as she gets up from the piano.

(She will not offend Miss Kate again, and goes and sits in a corner out of the way.) "People don't care for my singing here," she says.

"But I care. Sing to please me."

She shakes her head.

Miss Kate sits and watches. "Oh, you bold thing!" she says. "To go and sit just under a sconce, where you know you will be conspicuous! Oh, you bold thing!"

CHAPTER XI.

WITH Monday morning Miss Kate resumes her watch. There is a lion in the neighbourhood, a Roman camp, which the visitors of Nunehead are always taken to see. As the children are to go on this occasion, the governess goes too. The procession sets forth in carriages of various descriptions, hampers are stowed away as conveniently as may be, containing various meats and drinks, including a cold leg of mutton for the servants. Georgina gives Carlo her sketch-book to take care of, and informs the gentlemen of the party that she adores sketching from nature.

"Where are the children?" says Carlo, looking round with a hypocritical show of interest. Miss Kate informs him that the children are in the basket-carriage with the governess, and that they are a quarter of a mile behind. In the interests of morality Miss Kate devotes herself to the young Italian and endeavours to interest him in the Roman camp. "These foreigners are all ignorant and dissolute," thinks Miss Kate. "I don't believe he knows what a Roman camp is. And I know he wants to be off, flirting with that girl. Ugh!" She shudders virtuously; and Carlo, who cannot keep himself from looking out for the basket-carriage, thinks that she shudders because of the east wind, and wraps a shawl round her, as carefully as if she were his grandmother.

"Is it not a lovely view?" says Georgina when the camp is reached, and everybody gets down and strolls round, and the business of unpacking hampers is in full force.

"Where is the view?" says Carlo, looking round in vain for Junia. There are two distinct trenches, covered with grass. Also, two rows of trees, various cows chewing the cud, a green expanse in the middle distance dotted with sheep, a clump of trees more distant;

and, to bound the whole, a ridge of hills, round-backed and smooth. "Mole-hills," says Carlo, privately. But he sees Junia coming, so turns and smiles, "I like your view."

The cold collation is spread, and people gather round. Just as the champagne is uncorked a shower begins, and there is a rush to the carriages. Georgina seizes Junia's umbrella and holds it over her new hat. Carlo seizes Miss Kate's umbrella and holds it over Junia.

"Where have you hidden yourself?" he asks, squeezing her hand. "I never saw you all yesterday. I peeped into the schoolroom in the afternoon, but it was empty. What do you do on Sundays, Junia?"

"I sit in my room and read, and I write to June," says she, blushing with pleasure at being missed. It seems so strange that her comings and goings should be noticed by any one.

The shower goes off, and the ladies shake out their plumes. "Miss Berrington! Miss Berrington! see whether Molly's feet have got damp," cries Mrs Percy Smith. Junia runs off, and Carlo shuts up Miss Kate's umbrella and restores it to its place. "Alas! why do we not return to the house to eat?" says Carlo, looking at his thin boots.

"What will you take, Miss Berrington?" says the hostess, when the guests and children had been served.

"Some *mayonnaise*, please," says Junia, holding a plate. She has a few weaknesses; one of them is a fondness for that dish.

"Everybody can't have *mayonnaise*," says Mrs Percy Smith with a jerk. "You had better take some mutton."

Carlo hears and is disgusted. As pork is to a Jew, so is mutton to a Tuscan. "Cold mutton!" he thinks. "By the body of Bacchus! why not cold dog, cold cat, cold rat, or any other abomination?" Even the men of the party, who have no horror of mutton as mutton, absorb their *mayonnaise* with a thoughtful air, and thank their stars they are not in that poor devil's shoes. Junia, holding her plate meekly for a slice of cold mutton, has it suddenly taken out of her hand and a plate of *mayonnaise* substituted, with a peremptory order from the Italian marquis in his native tongue, to eat it up.

"Don't—don't take any notice of me," says Junia in the same tongue, blushing up to her forehead.

"Making love to him under one's very nose!" says Miss Kate to herself. "What a fool Maria must be not to see it!" She despises Maria, and her niece, and the officers, and the foreign marquis; everybody, indeed, except the rector, who is busy in his parish, as a rector ought to be. Were it not her duty to watch wicked goings-on, Miss Kate, too, would have been doing parish work this day instead of joining this party of frivolous, empty-headed people. She is pleased when everybody gets tired, and carriages are packed for the return home. The governess and the children have already taken their departure. Some of the men prefer walking. Mr Percy Smith (who is always coming or going by rail) is expected by the four o'clock train from Atherley Junction. Miss Kate volunteers to drive the pony-carriage to meet him.

At the north lodge the children are plaguing Mrs Anderson. Junia has driven the basket-carriage round to the stables and is returning to the lodge on foot. The day has been weary enough, and she is glad the sun is going down. Accustomed as she is to her yoke, yet it galls somewhat when such an one as Carlo looks on, flashing indignation from those kind, honest eyes. She is very sorry for Carlo, and wishes that he may forget her and marry somebody else, who will love him and appreciate all his goodness as fully as she does herself. Strange that such a sigh should accompany such a wish!

All at once a gate swings, and Carlo stands before her out of breath.

"I saw you in the distance; I was sure it was you," he pants.

"Thank you for that plate of *mayonnaise*," she said, trying to laugh. For Carlo was looking terribly serious, and had taken her hand and was squeezing it between his own. At the sound of the word *mayonnaise* he let her hand go, and stamped violently on the ground, clenching his fists with a passion altogether Italian. "What — what induces you to stay here, where you are not treated like a gentlewoman?" he cried, stammering in his rage.

"Because, partly, I cannot bear the idea of going to a strange place, and having strange faces all round me; and, partly, because I might go farther and fare worse. And then, too, there is Molly."

The answer did not turn away his wrath. "What would June say if he saw what I have seen? Such neglect, such——"

"But June will never know. That is the reason, perhaps, why things which annoy you so much, touch me so little. I say to myself, 'June will never know; so it does not matter.' And these are all passing annoyances, things which it would be waste of time to remember."

"But they are things which no one should bear. I shall speak to Anna."

"I forbid that, Carlo. And it would be no use. I must go or stay as seems best to myself."

"It can be good for no one to live in this sort of slavery."

"Granted, if you will. But I have not to think what is good for myself—not in that way, at least. And why should I, when I have June to think of?"

"And you bear all this for the sake of June?"

"Why else? I have but him. And then you know, of course, that I must do something to earn a living. Why not this, as well as anything else? I know the drawbacks of this line of life, and this situation. And I believe that every place, and every profession, has its own drawbacks. You know how I loved painting. Well, painting is an impossibility. And so, here I am, and here I mean to stay, as long as they will keep me. I don't pretend to have a genius for teaching, but I am fond of Molly, and I believe that I suit Mrs Percy Smith pretty well. And as

I told you, I might go farther and fare worse."

"When I think of your going on in this way for years and years, I feel inclined to shoot myself," said Carlo.

This was getting too serious. Junia attempted the elder sister method. "My dear Carlo, I wish you would not say such silly things."

Carlo was silenced for about sixty seconds. Then he burst out again. "I am silly, or mad, or anything else you please; but I can't bear to go away and leave you like this. Is there no way in which I can win your love? Junia, I—I will be patient. I will wait as long as you please. Only, don't send me away with a bare 'No.'"

"I cannot—I cannot bind myself by any promise while June wants my help. To help him I must be free."

"But a time will come when he will not want your help."

"I cannot tell. He finds the life out there so hard," and Junia's eyes began to fill with tears.

"Dearest, dearest Junia," Carlo murmured, kissing her hand.

"I must go, Carlo; I must say good-bye." And she would have passed on.

But he would not let her go. Holding her hand in his, he poured forth all his dreams, his hopes, his aspirations before her. With her, he said, he should accomplish great things. Alone, he should be nothing, do nothing, but be all his life a poor miserable nobody in spite of all his wealth — despised because of the Utopian crotchets which possessed him, and to which nobody would lend an ear.

"But with your counsel, your sympathy, how different it will be with me! I know and feel it. With your help, my Utopia might become a blessed reality. Think of that, my wise Junia. See what great things we might do for Italy—you and I."

Junia was silent. She had listened at first in spite of herself. As Carlo continued speaking, her face and attitude had gradually softened, and she let her hand lie quietly in his. She knew there was truth in what he was saying. Such work as he described she believed herself to be capable of. Did she not love Italy only less than he did; and would she not be always ready with the sympathy he craved? For a moment she saw herself as she might be if she became his wife; honoured, beloved; doing noble deeds; helped over all stumbling-blocks. Would not this be better than to be despised and rejected, and to climb back-stairs on sufferance all her days? Was it not hard, when one was doing one's best, to be treated as though one were doing one's worst? God did not treat men so, thought Junia. Why should the work be made so hard for the worker? she asked herself, with an irrepressible, human longing for love and peace stealing over her; a longing for honour and recognition of her work, born of Carlo's words.

She hesitated; how much, Carlo did not know.

"Come back to Italy, my love," he whispered; "come back to the land of love and sunshine. Say the word. Give me your dear self to take care of."

But she did not answer. She stood as if spell-bound. She wanted to make up her mind, to choose which path to take; and she could not. This standing, lingering at the door of what may be the Garden of Eden, is an awful moment for a woman. Junia turned pale and cold as she stood.

"If I could! oh, if I could!" she murmured. The clouds darkened, and rain-drops began to fall, but she heeded them not.

Carlo whispered, "Junia, if you could but trust me! If you could but believe that I love you!"

"But I do believe it. I know you love me," she said; and her lips began to quiver, and her eyes to fill. One moment more and Carlo would have won. But he could not wait; he was so sure, now.

"And you love me!" he cried. "I knew it." And he threw his arm round her and kissed the tears from her cheeks. "My darling, why be so cruel to yourself—so cruel to me? Why, when we love each other so truly?"

The kiss broke the spell. Junia turned away from him. "There is no such thing as love for me. How could I forget that! Good-bye, Carlo."

She walked away quickly, and the lodge-gate shut behind her.

From two opposite directions, converging on the spot where Carlo stood, came respectively Miss Kate Smith and Mr Percy Smith. Mr Percy Smith's face was in a pucker of amusement; for the last two minutes his lips had been ready for a loud whistle. Miss Kate, finding at the station that her brother had arrived by an earlier train, and had gone on to Nunehead by the "Green Dragon" chaise, had driven leisurely back by the lower road. It had happened quite providentially, she thought, when she observed Carlo and the governess in the distance.

Carlo, hearing the sound of approaching wheels, dashed into the underwood with a gesture of despair which, naturally enough, Mr Percy Smith did not understand. One thing was, however, quite certain. There had been love-making. There was no written code of the house of Smith on the subject; but Mr Percy Smith had a very clear notion that his wife had a tolerably strict unwritten code to guide her in such matters. Miss Berrington was very quiet and well-behaved, he thought; but a pretty girl was a pretty girl all the world over. It was just as well that no one but himself had witnessed the little episode. Were it to reach Mrs Percy Smith's ears he would not envy Miss Berrington the lecture she would be sure to get. "Poor thing!" said Mr Percy Smith. "Seems hard a girl mayn't have her little love affairs because she's a governess. Deuced hard." A sudden dip in the road brought him within hail of his sister. "Holloa, Kate!" he cried. Miss Kate was properly affectionate, and pleased to see her brother; but her mind was far away. She had witnessed the meeting and the parting between Carlo and the governess; and she expected an elopement shortly, and was planning how to prevent it.

Junia did not appear in the drawing-room that night. Nobody wanted her to play accompaniments, and she was at liberty to remain in her own room, and cry as much as she pleased. "I shall never, never see him again," she cried, weeping bitterly; feeling, now that she had sent him from her for ever, how good Carlo was, and how dearly she loved him. Now that he was quite, quite gone, she confessed to herself that she could never again meet with one so good and true, or so worthy of a woman's best love.

But Miss Kate believed that the governess was preparing for a midnight flight. The room occupied by the Italian marquis was nearly opposite hers. What should that ray of light under his chamber-door portend? In the interests of propriety and morality Miss Kate kept watch that night, sitting in her dressing-gown with her door ajar. She laughed in her sleeve when Carlo announced next morning at breakfast that business required his return to Florence. She saw through the blind. He was going off first; Miss Berrington was to follow. Carlo gone, and Junia and the children back at the house, she was able to transfer her watch to Junia exclusively. In the interests of morality she overhauled the letter-bag, and looked at the addresses of all the letters which lay on the hall table ready for the post. She watched for a week, and a week became a month, and summer became autumn, and still the governess went on with her daily duties, as if nothing had happened, or was ever going to happen to her.

"As if you had never been kissed by that man, you sly, underhand puss!" Miss Kate thought, when, on a Sunday evening, she saw Junia sitting in her accustomed corner by the book-table, absorbed and mute.

CHAPTER XII.

The reason of Carlo's journey to England Signora Isabella knew, but kept to herself. At the time of his departure, Signor Paolo was too much absorbed in meditation on Collective Humanity to take heed to the why and the wherefore of the action of one individual; and Signora Isabella, with an instinctive feeling that Carlo in search of a wife was not an object fit for the contemplation of a mind so vast as her husband's, kept the idyl all to herself, picturing in her own mind what she supposed to be the only possible ending. For, except that he had seen Junia, the signora had known nothing from Carlo; and as week after week went by she daily became more confirmed in the pleasant belief that Carlo and his wife were coming, would enter one evening in the twilight, and live happy ever after under the roof of old Casa Falconieri.

But one day Signor Paolo, recalled to the contemplation of the Individual by an hour's misery consequent on an unwontedly starched collar, remembered his old pupil.

"Does he never write?" he asked his wife.

"Only once. But I daresay he will be back soon."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because he has been gone some time."

"Humph! I believe he has gone to the dogs. He is in Paris, doubtless, spending his substance in riotous living. This comes of keeping the fellow mewed up all his life. I always said so. But the Marchese!—he had his deaf ear, *altro!* He was a regular pig-headed old Florentine——"

"My Paolo," murmured the signora, "the poor old man is dead."

"And Carlo now and then resembles him." Then, in answer to some unexpressed thought in his own mind, he cried, vehemently, "I would that London, Paris, and Vienna could be burnt up by the fire of heaven!"

Signora Isabella uttered a little shriek of protestation at this murderous speech.

"And you believe in Humanity!" Then, jumping illogically to a right conclusion, "Why don't you believe in our Carlo?" cried the fierce-browed woman, with tears in her eyes.

"Why?" But on raising his head the philosopher saw his wife's tears, and weakly held his tongue.

"At least do not condemn the poor boy unheard—like—like—an Austrian!" said the signora.

"Heaven forbid!" said the philosopher.

Carlo had quitted England, and had wandered, aimlessly and hopelessly, among the Swiss mountains. But when autumn came home-sickness returned and took possession of him, and drove him back to Florence, where he appeared to the signora's glad eyes one October evening.

Sitting at the window to catch the last ray of light for her work, she had not heard his knock, and cried out, startled by the suddenness of his appearance.

"My Carlo, whence come you?"

"From wandering up and down the face of the earth," Carlo replied, as he seated himself beside her.

"But"—the signora's eyes peered through the dusk to the door—"alone, my Carlo?"

"Alone." And thus she knew that Carlo had failed in his purpose. She was angry for his sake.

"I thought she would have appreciated you. Such devotion as yours deserved a better reward than this."

"Why should it? Why should it not be its own reward?"

The signora felt still more angry with Junia. "She is cruel and selfish!" she exclaimed.

"Not a word more!" said Carlo. "She is an angel. When you call her selfish you know not what you say."

"But—to refuse you——"

"Ah, if you must blame somebody, blame me. Why was I such a conceited fool as to suppose she would have me? I do believe I had a notion—before I saw her, that is—that my title might go for something,—that she might like to be called Marchesa. As if she cared for such trash. She is a saint, a martyr, an angel," cried Carlo again.

"If she were an angel she would take pity on you, my poor boy," said the signora, not without tears.

Such motherly sympathy was sweet to Carlo, and helped to keep him from brooding over his rejection as he might otherwise have done. He was sensible that if at any future time Junia should feel herself free, his suit would not gain a more favourable reception for his having to tell her that he had been leading a useless, aimless life. There was nothing to mend his case but to work; and the work should be, if possible, like Junia's, leaving self out of sight. It seemed to him that it would be possible for him to devote himself to Italy, as Junia devoted herself to June. And as she worked in obscure bypaths, far away from praise and honour, so would he.

The outcome of this resolution was contained in his answer to Signor Paolo's inquiry where he had been so long.

"I have been in England and in Switzerland. In the latter country I travelled for some time. And I have come back with the belief that Italy, England—ay, all Europe—had better go to school to the Swiss."

"They might go to a worse school indeed," said Signor Paolo.

"How long will Italy be disgraced by her seventeen millions who can neither read nor write? I am going to bestir myself. I will have schools built, and every tenant on my estates shall be compelled to send his children. Only you and the signora must help me to find schoolmasters and schoolmistresses. Why, what have I said?" For Signor Paolo suddenly embraced him.

"He has not gone to the dogs, after all! Isabella, you were right for once. Carlo, you are my own pupil. Such a scheme I have had in a corner of my brain for years; but no money, alas! Now you have the money, and we can begin. But, Carlo, before we teach the children we must teach the teachers. *Ecco!*"

. . . . . .

"And so you and Carlo are actually going to sit down and teach nasty dirty children," said the signora, when the plan had been further discussed.

"Thus only can we exalt the teacher's office," said the philosopher.

If such a salve as this was good for a wounded heart, the signora would have nothing to say. But that her Paolo should put aside his great book, the 'Exposition of the New Religion,' and his essay-writing, and his philosophical meditations, for such an object, was just one of those silly actions of which only the cleverest men seemed capable. For why, in the name of common-sense, the signora asked, was it necessary that *il popolo* should know how to read and write? Let the *popolo* fear God and do its duty, and all would be well with it. What had reading and writing done for her Paolo, for instance? Had it not given him prison and exile and the fear of death, sundry times?

"Whereas if he had been a farm-steward to some rich community, we might have had a plenty of everything, and put by money to keep us comfortably in our old age," said the unheroic Roman woman.

Once fairly buckled to his work—perhaps it was the old Falconieri leaven of pig-headedness that kept Carlo from throwing it up in despair at the violent opposition it met with from the lovers of ignorance—he ventured to write to Junia. He did his best to keep all mention of love out of his letter, and to enlist such sympathy as he might, as a friend, be entitled to in behalf of his work. But the love would obtrude itself, cornerwise, as it were. So, after long weighing every word, as men do weigh their words when they wish to give them a sweet significance, and yet avoid offending, he sent his letter, hoping that the tie of old acquaintanceship might prevail with Junia, and obtain an answer.

But no answer came.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I BELIEVE that I am in the right groove now," Carlo wrote to Junia. "I hope at least that you will think so when I tell you that I have determined not to be one of the incapables, not one of the dreamers, while our Italy wants men. If you give me your approval I shall do my work better; but with it or without it, I shall still put my shoulder to the wheel and strive to give a practical negation to the reproach cast on my countrymen—that we are incapable of steady, well-sustained work.

"As to dreaming,—one's dreams may become so much a part of one's self, that the putting away of them may be impossible as long as body and soul remain undivorced. There is one dream which I prefer to the possession of many fair realities."

This letter reached Junia when she was in sore need of some outward sign of friendship. It found her watching alone, and with failing strength, by Molly's sick-bed. Alone she had watched from the beginning; for at the first mention of scarlet fever the whole family had withdrawn in terror and consternation. That there should be sickness and death at Atherley, or at Nunehead village, was but natural. But that the King of Terrors should come and assert his sovereignty at Nunehead Park or within the boundaries where Mrs Percy Smith had reigned like the typical woman of old, queen-like, knowing neither plague nor sorrow!—this indeed was a problem to herself and those who surrounded her.

To all except Junia. That which to these careless prosperous ones was so strange and unnatural, came to her as other events of her life had come: with a shock of pain and surprise at first,—for she loved Molly so dearly! —then, to be lived through, to be accepted and endured because it was God's ordering. She took it all so naturally! they said; just as if she were accustomed to sickness and death. And Mrs Percy Smith wept wildly that death should dare to come to Nunehead, where the nurseries were so spacious and lofty, and the best medical advice had always been procured for every childish ailment.

Miss Kate, even, was surprised into giving the governess a grudging admiration as day after day passed and her attendance on Molly did not flag. It was lucky, Miss Kate thought, that she had kept to herself that love-scene she had witnessed between Miss Berrington and the Italian marquis. For Mrs Percy Smith would have been indignant, naturally, had she known it, and the governess would have been sent about her business, and Molly would have been left to servants and hired nurses in her dire sickness. The governess was not altogether a bad young woman, after all, Miss Kate thought. She was an educated person, and she was showing now the good of education. One always found, in a terrible emergency like the present, that an educated person would help more thoroughly for no wages at all, than an uneducated hireling would for the very highest wages. Of course Miss Berrington was very fond of Molly; that had something to do with it, no doubt.

But when Molly died, and Georgina and Percy fell ill together, Miss Kate's nerves gave way, and she would have quitted Nunehead had she had a friend willing to take her from an infected house, or had she dared to go to a hotel without the fear of taking the sickness she sought to escape. But her own fears on one hand, and her friends' fears on the other, forced her to remain at Nunehead; and she shut herself up and lived in an atmosphere of aromatic vinegar. And then she fell ill, or thought she did, and Junia came and nursed her for three days, till she was stricken down herself with real scarlet fever.

How was it she did not die? was the question Junia often asked herself during her slow, weary convalescence. She had done what she could, she thought, and it seemed impossible to drudge monotonously, ceaselessly, again as she had drudged heretofore. Just before Molly's illness she had sent almost all her savings to June, to help him to start on his own account. Molly was gone where she wanted no more of her love and care; Anna, now and always, was sufficient to herself; Edward's future was secure; and if indeed she could no longer drudge for June's sake, surely it was better for her to die.

Only when she read Carlo's letter over again did a faint longing for life arise within her. For then it seemed a pity to die, and so miss the chance of being happy one day! If Carlo should ever again speak to her of love, she knew what her answer would be. "It is only because I am past working for June," she said, in anxious self-vindication of her changed purpose. She thought sometimes of writing to Carlo, but shrank from doing it, even with the pen in her hand. For what if he too should have changed his purpose, or should change it when he saw her thin pale face? If he ever came back, then——. And again she asked herself, Should she be alive to see that day? These were Junia's selfcommunings as she lay through the long dull hours, watching the wintry sky from the schoolroom window.

Though she was still very much alone, she began to feel that she was not so completely neglected by the grown-up members of the family as she had been before Molly's death. Now and then Miss Kate would come in and say a friendly word. Once, even, she brought a nosegay which she had gathered herself. That nosegay meant a great deal in Miss Kate's estimation. It was the outward sign and assurance of reconciliation—of Christian forgiveness. By her acceptance of that three days' nursing from Junia, she had condoned (though somewhat unwillingly) the offence committed by that young woman in allowing the Italian marquis to make love to her. When we are ill and nervous, and there has been a death in the house, it behoves us to forgive our enemies; more especially when one cherishes hopes of being a rector's wife some day. Therefore Miss Kate curbed the virtuous instincts which so strongly prompted her to hate the governess; and she even confided to Junia the fact that there would be no gaieties at Nunehead this Christmas, and that it was a mercy the Lord took Molly instead of Georgina or Percy; because Molly was nobody's pet, and (poor thing!) was plain besides.

And Mr Percy Smith, too, would put his head in at the schoolroom door, and say "Good morning!" cheerily. And more astonishing still, he brought her one day, with his own hands, a bottle of exquisite wine, telling her it was part of a stock he had laid down to be drunk on his son's coming of age. "But after what you did for us, Miss Berrington, we feel that nothing we can do for you will be an adequate return"—a speech which capped Junia's surprise, and rendered her speechless. Nor was Mrs Percy Smith behindhand in her acknowledgments. "I'm sure the best servant I have ever had would not have nursed Molly as you did," she said. Junia, feeling the thaw in everybody's manner, began to hope that at last she would be loved for her faithful service.

And this hope helped to strengthen her, and added somewhat to the desire to live, which Carlo's letter had awakened.

Gradually the disorganised household fell back into its accustomed ways. Junia sat in the schoolroom one Sunday morning waiting for the church bells to ring out. She was going by her usual solitary path across the fields. Very solitary it would be to her now; for her heart yearned for the dead child that nobody wanted. And she could not bear the thought of sitting in her place in church, just opposite the marble monument, which every one but herself had been to see. Mr Percy Smith came in, cheery and *débonnaire* as usual, with, "How d'e do, Miss Berrington? Going to church, eh? But you are not fit to walk so far."

In her heart Junia had been dreading the walk ever since Mrs Percy Smith's message had reached her that she wished every one to attend at church that morning, and hoped Miss Berrington would be able to go. Junia took it as a command, which in reality it was, only veiled in more courteous language than heretofore.

Mr Percy Smith sat down and talked.

"You are looking low, Miss Berrington. You must not let yourself get low. We cannot allow that. Is the last bottle of wine finished? You shall have another. Would you prefer another class of wine? Tokay, for instance?"

Junia murmured her thanks. "Any wine from your cellar is sure to be good."

"You're not far wrong there," said he, with a pleasant smile. "'The best of everything' is my motto. If there's a thing I hate, it's the cheap and nasty."

"Yes," said Junia, mechanically, as the thought crossed her mind. What would this man do if he were brought face to face with actual poverty? Poverty, that is, in which the "cheap and nasty" and "the best of everything" are equally forbidden luxuries. What would such a man do with dry bread for his portion? Junia looked at him as the thought occurred to her mind. No, such speculation was absurd with regard to such a man as this, whose riches seemed boundless; who appeared to transmute to gold everything he touched in the way of business!

Mr Percy Smith continued talking, and as he talked he looked at the governess, whose good looks were enhanced beyond anything he had observed formerly by the handsome mourning she wore for Molly. He had desired that the mourning for the governess should be of the very best. "After what she has done, you are bound to treat her better than the servants," he had said to his wife. So the proper order was given; and Mr Percy Smith, as he looked at the handsome silk and the crape trimmings, felt that the mourning was a credit to the family, and that the governess was a credit to the mourning, and that he should have some satisfaction in paying the bill.

But something more was to be done besides dressing the governess in handsome mourning. They must raise her salary. He refrained from mentioning this intention to Junia, supposing that his wife might consider it an infringement on her province; but there was one little thing which he could mention. There were to be photographs prepared of poor Molly, and the governess was to have one, enclosed in a handsome locket.

Junia bowed her head, and could not speak for a moment. When she did, it was with tears. "I had wished so much for a photograph," she said, "but did not like to ask for one. You are too good!"

"We thought you would value such a souvenir of her."

"Yes; she was so fond of me. And I—I would have kept her alive if I could, indeed," cried Junia, struggling with her tears. "I tried to do my duty by her always. That is the only comfort I have in thinking of her now."

"Nobody doubts you did your duty. Indeed my wife has always said that you were the most trustworthy governess she ever had. It must be a satisfaction to you to know that."

"If I could but have saved her!" was all Junia could say.

How differently people look when they cry! thought Mr Percy Smith. His wife, handsome as she was, looked utterly hideous in tears. His sister was simply indescribable. This young woman looked, if possible, handsomer so. Something like a tall lily bowed by the rain, he thought. Very charming, very pathetic, and very creditable to the family was this grief of hers.

He wished to show his appreciation of it. He drew his chair a little nearer, and bid her not cry, repeating that she had done her duty, and they all knew it. Then, as she did not stop crying instantly—for how could she!—he drew nearer still, put his arms round her, and kissed her.

Then to Junia came a revulsion of feeling which almost stunned her. She had been thinking of nothing but her poor little Molly. And this man, who a month ago would have passed her, if so minded, without the briefest morning greeting — this man, passing from extremest distance to extremest familiarity, had ventured to put his arm round her—to kiss her cheek!

She rose, her tears stopped, contempt and anger struggling within her.

"How dare you? You forget yourself."

Mr Percy Smith was slightly taken aback, but would have spoken, had not the words been taken out of his mouth.

"Upon my word!" said Miss Kate's voice. She stood there with the door in her hand.

Junia, trembling with anger, ran to her and caught her dress. "Miss Smith," she gasped out, breathlessly.

Miss Kate shook her off. "I am surprised at you, Miss Berrington; I am very much surprised," she said, with emphasis.

"You cannot be half so surprised as I am," Junia rejoined, holding by the table for support. "Such familiarity is cruel—insulting. It shows a want of consideration beyond anything I could have imagined."

Miss Kate smiled coldly. Her brother had opened the window and stepped out on the lawn, at the first words she had spoken. He thought he had best let his sister have her say out, and make it all right with her afterwards. Hard words broke no bones, fortunately. This thought was with reference to the young woman he had just kissed.

Miss Kate's words were rather heart-breaking than bone-breaking. "Don't put on an air of injured innocence," she said. "I can see through it all perfectly well, Miss Berrington. You want to make me believe that the familiarity was not of your own inviting. Talk about insult! 'Tis my sister-in-law who is the person insulted." Miss Kate would have said more, but was stopped by Mr Percy Smith, who had re-entered the house by the front door, and called to her from the hall that the carriage was waiting.

Miss Kate turned to go, but turned back before she shut the schoolroom door, saying, "I came by my sister-in-law's desire to offer you a seat in the carriage. She sent you a kind message, which, under the circumstances, I do not see fit to deliver. You are a bold, sly flirt, Miss Berrington; and if you are nothing worse, it is for want of time and opportunity. My sister-in-law shall know the sort of person she has been harbouring in her house."

Mr Percy Smith came up and took hold of her arm. "Come along, Kate, and don't make a fool of yourself," he said; and he led her forcibly away.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I'll tell Maria," she hissed.

"You'll just hold your tongue."

"That I won't!" she said, stoutly.

"Very well." He whispered something in her ear which acted like a charm; for her head dropped and her face turned pale, and she walked to the carriage with the mien of a whipped spaniel.

"Come along, Miss Berrington," said the master of the house, appearing once more at the schoolroom door; "don't bear malice. There's no harm done. 'Tis not the first time you've been kissed, I'll be bound." And there was a twinkle in his eye as he said this.

Junia, deigning no answer, turned and walked out on the lawn by the window which Mr Percy Smith had left open. She went round by the servants' entrance and got up to her room by the back staircase. When the sound of the carriage-wheels had died quite away, she descended and dragged herself slowly to church across the fields.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was very late. As Junia entered the porch, she heard the voice of the rector, reading—

"Saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies."

The door was ajar. She sat down in the porch, thinking it best not to disturb the congregation by such a late entrance. Only when she tried to join in the service with the help of her Prayer-book, and failed, did she become fully conscious of the tumult in her mind. Stray words of the rector's sermon came to her through the open door whenever his head turned that way. He was preaching on the ever-living, all-seeing God. On this theme Junia began at length to discourse to herself thus—

"All-seeing? What does the rector know of Him, that he says so?

"Where was God this morning? Why did He let such a thing happen to me? Why did He let that cruel woman utter such unjust, insulting words?

"And I, what have I done to deserve this?

"They say that no insult can come to a woman,—that men will always respect her as long as she respects herself.

"It is false, false, false.

"For the poor there is neither honour, nor respect, nor courtesy.

"But I thought that God would always take care of me.

"Have I forsaken God, then?

"No; He knows I have not.

"Has He forsaken me?"

But there she stopped, appalled at the question which she knew not how to answer. For, side by side with an instant, vehement denial stood a doubt which was persistent; as persistent as the denial in her mind was vehement. Never in her life had Junia doubted God's instant, unceasing care of her. Her whole belief was summed up in one sentence: God is here; God, the Father of us all.

The shock of the first doubt, to a mind which had hitherto been satisfied with such a simple creed, could bring nothing but blank bewilderment. Junia failed to reason herself out of it; the indignant denial which was all the answer she could bring to her doubt, was due to no process of reasoning; it was mere instinct, nothing more.

But one thing at least was clear to her. She must leave Nunehead. And now Carlo's warning recurred to her for the first time. He was right when he said she ought not to stay in a place where she was not treated as a gentlewoman; and she, in her stoicism, her endurance of a long train of small neglects, had been utterly, completely wrong. She saw it now well enough. What should she have done had this cruel affront been offered her during Molly's lifetime? She could not tell. She had had a clear duty to fulfil towards Molly, and she would have had to choose between her duty to Molly and her duty to herself. But Molly was gone to God; and Junia found herself thanking God that He had taken the child.

"Thank God!" The very words, coming as they did from her heart, seemed to banish the doubt which had arisen with such strange suddenness. "Thank God!" she repeated again, clasping her hands. She could not understand, but she could not doubt, now. Perhaps God would show her the why and the wherefore by-and-by. Meanwhile, one step at least was clear before her.

The sermon was over: the congregation began to disperse. The villagers stared as they passed out, to see the Nunehead governess sitting in the porch. The family always passed through another door. Junia waited to hear the carriage drive off; but it did not drive off, though the doors had been shut. Then she remembered that this was a Sacrament Sunday, and knew that the Nunehead family must be remaining for that service. Junia's Prayer-book slipped from her hands in her astonishment as she became aware of this. Could it be that Mr Percy Smith was remaining? Could it be that Miss Kate would dare to partake of that great feast after uttering such words of insult? Yet so it was; for Junia could see both the road and the footpath to Nunehead from where she sat, and they were not visible on either.

And must these remain, and she turn her back on such a feast?

Junia had read the rubric many a time, without thinking much about it. There had been no need, for she knew little of malice or hatred, and nought of evil living; there had been no scope in her life for such sins as these. But now she opened her Prayer-book and read the rubric, examining herself.

"Do I forgive from the bottom of my heart all that has been trespassed against me this morning? or do I bear malice?"

Junia's cheeks tingled as she recalled Miss

Kate's words : "You are a bold, sly flirt ; and if you are nothing worse, it is for want of time and opportunity." And then the man's sneer, "It's not the first time."

Her answer came from the bottom of her heart : "Yes, I do bear malice. I do hate. I hate them both. They have insulted me, and I cannot forgive them—I cannot, I cannot."

Yet old habit is strong. Junia had always loved that service ; had never yet turned her back on it. Rather than stay away, had she not forgiven Mrs Odynell her sneers and her unkindness to herself and June ? And the forgiveness had not been so very hard to compass, after all. But it seemed impossible that she should leave off resenting the behaviour of Mr Percy Smith or the cruel words of Miss Kate : Miss Kate, whom she had nursed so faithfully till she fell ill herself. She knew that she was indignant—angry. But was not the indignation just ? Was not the anger righteous ?

The more she thought, the more horrible did the idea appear of partaking of the cup after these two — her enemies. "Yes," she thought, "they have proved themselves my enemies, just when I had begun to hope they had become my friends. I cannot stay. For me the cup would be desecrated." She rose with a shudder of disgust, and walked slowly back to Nunehead.

CHAPTER XV.

Late in the afternoon, when Junia knew that Miss Kate would be reading or sleeping in her own room, and Mr Percy Smith beguiling the tedious hours by a saunter through the greenhouses, she sought Mrs Percy Smith in her boudoir.

The lady of the house was alone, surrounded with luxuries and anxieties. For Georgina and Percy both continued weakly, and the brilliant prospects of the one and the life of the other seemed by turns in peril, and by turns occupied this prosperous woman's thoughts, bringing wrinkles and grey hairs where none ought to have been. She looked up from her book—a book on the joys of heaven. How she had yawned over it! She was glad to see Junia. She put out her hand, saying, " Pray sit down, Miss Berrington—there, in that low chair; and bring it close to the fire."

Such an altered address did not make it easier for Junia to tell her errand. On her way to the boudoir—it was quite a journey from her own corner of the house—she had prepared herself to bear Mrs Percy Smith's anger—for it was a habit of the mistress of Nunehead to be angry whenever a hireling signified his or her desire to quit her service. But she had not prepared herself for kindness such as this. It was with a faltering voice that she made it understood that she wished to leave her situation. Still less was she prepared for what followed. Mrs Percy Smith absolutely refused to part with her.

"I never heard anything so absurd. You must think better of it, Miss Berrington. Why should you want to go among strangers?"

"I am very sorry to go," said Junia; "but I have quite made up my mind that it will be best so."

"But, Miss Berrington, don't you know that

I'm a very difficult person to suit, and that you suit me perfectly? You have been here long enough to know my ways; and I have not the slightest wish to change, I do assure you."

Then, seeing that the argument apparently failed to convince the governess, Mrs Percy Smith began to lose patience. She was quite ready, she said, to acknowledge her services, if that was what Junia wanted. She had spoken with her husband, and they had agreed on raising her salary ten pounds. Under the circumstances she mentioned it now, though it was contrary to her rule to enter upon secular business on Sundays.

"You are very kind, but I must go," was all Junia could say.

"But how can you be so obstinate?—and so silly?" said Mrs Percy Smith.

Mr Percy Smith's entrance at this juncture offered Junia, as she hoped, an opportunity of retiring. But Mrs Percy Smith stopped her. "I must say I shall take it exceedingly ill if you leave me in this way, and subject me to the inconvenience and worry of seeking a new governess, after all the trouble and fatigue I have undergone lately with Georgie and Percy. It is not kind of you, Miss Berrington, to hint at such a thing."

"Miss Berrington is not talking of leaving us, I hope," said Mr Percy Smith, blandly, as he seated himself.

"Yes, indeed," said his wife, with some irritation. "And when I ask why—and I'm sure I have a right to ask—I get nothing from her except that she must go. I'm sure if she wants a change, she's welcome to holidays. There won't be any lessons for weeks to come. Neither Georgie nor Percy is fit for them."

"And Miss Berrington doesn't look fit for them either."

"Of course not. No, I will not hear another word on the subject, Miss Berrington. Take what holidays you please, but don't hint at leaving me." And thus Junia found herself dismissed.

That Sunday evening in the family circle was not pleasant for Junia. Five words did

Mrs Percy Smith speak to her, and no more. "Your tea is poured out." What freezing dignity clothed these words! Junia felt as uncomfortable as if she had really committed some grave offence. As she passed to the tea-table Miss Kate drew herself up, and caught away her long skirts as if the governess carried the plague in her garments, giving her, at the same time, a look of scorn which Junia wept to think of afterwards.

Round the fire the trio in the drawing-room sat and discussed the governess after she had retired.

"If she wants to go I should not ask her to stay, if I were you," said Miss Kate to her sister-in-law, with as much significance as she dared, her brother being by.

"But her going just now would be so inconvenient," Mrs Percy Smith complained. "I intended keeping her at least another year and a half—in fact, till Percy is strong enough to go to school. And when I think of all the changes I had before Miss Berrington came it makes me quite ill. Seven governesses!"

"I thought it was eight," sneered Miss Kate.

"And the airs and graces of them all! One complaining her room was damp; another, because she was required to use the back staircase; a third, because the servants were not respectful; a fourth, because sherry was not poured out for her at luncheon; a fifth, because I didn't give regular holidays; and a sixth, because the schoolroom piano had not the additional keys! I wonder they did not spoil my temper among them."

"You must raise her salary, Maria, if you want to keep her," said Mr Percy Smith.

"I told her we were going to raise it ten pounds. I might as well have said ten pence for all the impression I made."

"Tell her you will double it. See what impression that will make."

"Well, if you don't mind. I really want to keep her, Percy."

"Of course you do. I daresay she'll stay if you put things before her in a proper light. For myself," Mr Percy Smith continued, putting his hands in his pockets and stretching himself, "I have never yet lost any servant that I really chose to keep. Practically every man has his price."

"And every woman, I suppose you mean," said Miss Kate.

"Just so."

The brother and sister gave each other a look. His look meant nothing in particular. But Miss Kate thought there was a cruel significance in it; that it was intended to remind her of the words whispered in her ear that morning.

And she was all the more determined that the governess should leave Nunehead. For now, whenever she saw Junia, she would be reminded of those words — words which, if uttered aloud, would humiliate her to the last day of her life.

For Miss Kate had a secret!

CHAPTER XVI.

At Mrs Anderson's humble lodgings at Dittisham, where Junia had gone on leaving Nunehead—only for holidays, Mrs Percy Smith had insisted even to the last moment — a letter came to her from Anna, dated from a hotel in Paris, and re-directed from Nunehead by Mrs Percy Smith.

"Your letter only reached me the day we left London," Anna wrote, "and I have had not a moment to reply to it till now. I think your resolve to leave the Smiths exceedingly unwise. In our position, my dearest Junia—how much longer must I preach it to you! —we must bow to circumstances. What is the good of declaring that you will not risk a repetition of the impertinence you have met with? The weakest always goes to the wall.

How do you know you will not have to endure precisely the same sort of impertinence in your next situation? At the same time I quite see that you cannot help feeling offended and humiliated. I think if such a thing were to happen to me, as that a man, married or single, of high or low degree, should kiss me without my full consent, I should cry myself blind with rage. I think with you that kisses are symbolic. I have heard some women say that 'they thought nothing of a kiss.' I do not envy them their bringing up, that's all! A woman's most delicate instincts must have been quite rubbed off, one would think, before she could coolly utter such a speech as that. But you and I, thank Heaven, are not of that species.

"Miss Kate Smith's coming in and saying what she did, makes a very unpleasant complication. One might get over a kiss — it leaves no mark; and one might put one's humiliation and disgust in one's pocket — where I put my pride long ago; but a suspicion! One can't get over that. However, I should not, if I were you, pay any attention to her threat of informing her sister-in-law. I do not think she will do it, because she would make her own position in her brother's house rather unpleasant by so doing. She cannot tell of you without telling of her brother. Perhaps you had better try to conciliate her. But you will know best whether she is a person to be conciliated. At all events, I hope you may be induced, on consideration, to remain where you are. For, after all, you are no worse off than a housemaid. If all the housemaids with a grievance like yours were instantly to leave their situations, there would have been a grand strike long ago; and we should see on all sides ladies sweeping and scrubbing and making the beds, to the great advantage of their health, and the lessening of doctors' fees. There is scarcely a hulking fool of seventeen who does not think he has a right to 'kiss the maids' whenever he chooses. Were you a housemaid you might organise a strike to-morrow. I have known such an one, a spirited young woman, who did give warning to her mistress, because she did not choose to be kissed by the mistress's son! And this young woman got a fresh place immediately. We governesses are placed a little higher than the housemaids, and are treated, sometimes, with less honour. We cannot help ourselves. Mere monads as we are, without the faculty of combination, what can we expect? Observation must have taught you that justice is only obtainable by a class, in so far as combination is possible to that class.

"It may be that in some future age even such isolated creatures as governesses may find a champion to vindicate their right to courteous and considerate treatment at the hands of their employers. But I am not sanguine as to this. It is more probable that by the time the millennium comes, governesses will be as extinct as ichthyosauri.

"*P.S.*—By the by, I remember seeing Mr Percy Smith's name as one of the governors or directors of the Governesses' Friendly Institute, an association with which the father of my pupils, Mr Calvert, has some slight connection. My dearest Junia, pray be cautious. I know what your face looks like when you are indignant! A Lebrun might make a study of it! Do, pray, remember that a governess must put a smooth face on all sorts of unpleasant things. I trust that nothing so sad may ever happen as that you or I should be dependent on the charity of that or of any similar institution; still, in this world of ups and downs, it seems most unwise to do anything which might offend persons whose good word might, through some unforeseen contingency, become of value to us. It is truly unfortunate for a governess to be so good-looking as you are; but you cannot help it. You must take comfort in the thought that it is a misfortune which in the nature of things will grow less every year. *Addio!* My pupils and their cousin, Mr Cyril Calvert, are going to the Louvre, and insist on my going with them. Write to me immediately, for I am anxious about you."

As Anna was out of London, Junia could not expect any help from her in getting a situation. She therefore advertised in the 'Times,' and in one or two other prominent papers, and awaited the result.

She had written to June on leaving Nunehead, giving as her reason for taking that step, that she had on one occasion been treated with such impertinence as made it clear to her that prudence, no less than self-respect, forbade her remaining any longer in the family. Of Miss Kate's cruel words she said nothing, because she could not, for very shame. She still endeavoured, as she always did, to show him a bright side in her concerns, lest he should be depressed on her account; and it was to be hoped, she wrote, that as she had been obliged to change, she would now get a situation where her experience would count for something, and obtain her a better salary. Her leaving Nunehead would be a good thing, if by that means she were able to send him more money. She was sure that June would approve of what she had done; and the writing of the letter eased her mind.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was half-past five on a New Year's morning at Dittisham. Mrs Anderson, in a night-cap surmounted by a big straw bonnet, was running hither and thither. Frost clung to the window-panes; icicles hung from the pump in the back-yard. Junia, dressed for a journey, stood shivering as she waited for the mail-cart which was to take her to Atherley Junction.

"How kind this is!" she said, as Mrs Anderson brought her a cup of tea and a packet of sandwiches neatly tied up. "Why did you take such trouble? I should have got a cup of tea at the first refreshment station I came to. There is one between Atherley and London."

"Trouble! As if I'd let a dog go without his breakfast such weather as this!" said Mrs Anderson—"much less you, Miss Berrington, ma dear, as I've always had a liking an' a respect for. Drink yor tea, and may it do you good. And when you get to the Junction, do 'ee take a drop o' sumfin warm, for 'twill be terribly cold a-top o' the mail-cart."

"Cold!" Junia repeated, feebly; "and I am so cold already. I feel as if I should die."

"Dear, dear, now don't 'ee taalk like that. You didn aft to taalk o' dying," said Mrs Anderson, relapsing in her earnestness into the dialect of her youth. "Bless your dear heart, you'll be comin' back one o' these here days along wi' a nice young man. That you will, my dear soul."

"No, indeed," said Junia, with a wintry smile. Weary or not, she knew she must work. And she was all the more anxious for work because she had very little money left. So little, that she was going to London third-class to-day, to see after the only situation that had yet been offered her, for all her advertising. A widow lady at Richmond had written and named this day for an interview before engaging her.

"Do 'ee think you'm fit to travel?" said Mrs Anderson, as her lodger stepped feebly into the mail-cart. By the light of the one flickering candle, Junia had looked deadly pale, it was true; but Mrs Anderson had set it down to the effect of the bad light. The feebleness of Junia's gait was no candle-light effect, however; and the good woman began to feel uneasy.

"I don't know whether I am fit or not," said Junia, in answer to her question; "but I must go. I cannot afford to let this chance of a situation slip through my hands. I have been idle quite long enough."

"If 'tis the money you're thinking of, Miss Berrington, ma dear, you needn't to mind. Folks that has to work for their living gets low in purse sometimes, be they gentle or be they simple. You could stay on a bit, an' pay me when you get paid. For the matter o' that, I could lend 'ee a trifle, if 'twas any ways a convenience."

"No, no," Junia exclaimed, putting out her hand. "But I thank you—indeed I do. I am just as grateful as if I took it. There are kind souls in this world, and it warms me to know it. Good-bye."

Alas for the class distinctions which Anna had bidden her sister so carefully to cultivate! Junia bent her head down and kissed Mrs Anderson's rough cheek. "I shall always think of you as a friend," she said. And the mail-cart drove off.

At Atherley Junction there was nearly an hour to wait for the up train. There was no fire anywhere. Junia, benumbed with her cold drive, walked slowly up and down the platform waiting for the booking-office to open. As she turned for the twentieth time, she perceived a stranger examining the address on the trunk, which stood ready on the platform. She hastened towards her property, but stopped and half turned again; for the stranger, lifting up his head, disclosed the countenance of Mr Percy Smith, half smothered in a fur cap, and innumerable folds of white comforter.

He walked up briskly and took both her hands. "My dear Miss Berrington, can it be you?" he cried. "Going to London on such a day as this?"

"Yes," said Junia, briefly. All her resentment returned at the sight of this man, so prosperous, so warmly clad in those costly furs, looking as if he had never been sad, or sorry, or cold in his life! She—she was as Anna had said: a little higher than a housemaid, and treated with less honour. Should she have been so insulted by Miss Kate, but for this man having shown himself so wanting in proper respect towards her? There had always been a gulf between her and her employers: their making, not hers. For to Junia, as to all high and noble natures, service and fidelity were synonyms. But now the gulf was widening on her side, and no concession—or fancied concession—on their part could bridge it over and make her at one with them, as it might have been before, had they so chosen. She did not belong to such as these. They stood in the ranks of the oppressors: she, whether she would or no, stood in the ranks of the oppressed.

She turned, intending to seek the ladies' waiting-room. Mr Percy Smith turned too, and walked with her.

"What are you going to London for?" he asked.

"Business," Junia answered, laconically.

"Business? Nonsense! What business can a delicate young lady like you have in London on such a wretchedly cold day as this?" "And quite alone, too," he continued, as she did not answer. "You are alone, are you not?" he inquired, with that pertinacity which perhaps had had something to do with his unvarying success in business. "Come now, Miss Berrington, don't be cross," he continued, smiling. "You shouldn't be cross with *me*, for I'm sure I am a good friend of yours. Now I really do want to know what takes you up to

London on a day when you ought to be by the fireside."

All at once Junia remembered the caution Anna's letter had contained; and, remembering it, tried for Anna's sake to put on a mask of civility. Alas! if Anna should at any time be in want of the good word of this governor of the Governesses' Friendly Institute!

"I am going to London," she said, "to seek a situation. You know that I told Mrs Percy Smith some weeks ago that I wished to leave her."

"But you did not really mean it?"

"Indeed I did."

"Nonsense, nonsense! You must not think of leaving us. My wife has taken a liking to you, and will be extremely hurt and put out if you go away."

It was useless to go over that ground again, Junia felt with a sigh of weariness.

Mr Percy Smith continued: "As for my sister—depend upon it that as long as you remain in my house she will be civil to you. Trust me for that."

Junia might have answered, but she preferred to remain silent.

"How long do you remain in London?" he asked.

"That will depend on circumstances."

"By the by, my wife mentioned that she owed you a trifle. I forget what it was."

"Ten pounds," said Junia.

"Ten pounds. I have pen and ink in my bag, and may as well write you a cheque now, else I may forget it again."

"If you please," said Junia. She turned into the waiting-room and sat down on the first seat she came to. The room was like a vault. Even Mr Percy Smith felt the chill pierce beneath his furs. He called "Porter!" and a porter appeared from nowhere in particular. At a cabalistic sign of Mr Percy Smith's hand, lo, a lighted match, a blazing fire, and "Anything else, sir?" from the man, as he made a brisk pretence of sweeping up a clean hearth. Mr Percy Smith went away and came back again, just as Junia had succeeded in drawing her purse out of her pocket with her benumbed fingers.

"Here you are," he said, holding out a first-class ticket for Euston. "And here"—giving her a closed envelope—"is the cheque, payable at the London and Westminster Bank. Put that away in your bag and come. The train will be up in a moment."

"I do not wish you to pay for my ticket," said Junia, nettled. "Take it back, please."

"Don't be foolish, Miss Berrington. The right thing for you to do will be to come back to Nunehead and be nursed. You are fit for nothing else. If you'll do that, I'll take back the ticket. Come now! Any stranger would tell you that you don't look fit for work," he added, compassionately. But Junia was stung, not soothed, by such compassion now.

"Enough of this!" she exclaimed. "It is you and your sister between you who drive me from Nunehead."

As she spoke, the porter rushed in and

seized her bag, and the train came thundering up.

"Well, wilful must have its way, I suppose," said Mr Percy Smith, lightly, offering his arm. Junia walked quickly to the platform, and entered the carriage indicated by the porter.

"One would say you wanted to get out of my way," laughed Mr Percy Smith.

"Just so. Your way is distasteful to me."

"You don't really mean that, I know," he said, putting out his hand. Junia had no choice but to take it. There were ladies in the carriage; and good-breeding forbids the exhibition of private resentments in public places.

"Good-bye till you come back. For you will come back." Keeping her hand in his, he drew her towards him, whispering, "Do you know that you will be acting very wickedly if you enter a new family after having had the scarlet fever so lately? You might give it to all the children. You never thought of that, eh? Then think of it now, Miss Berrington. Good-bye. You'll be at Nunehead, I know, by the time I'm back." He stepped down, and crossed to the platform to meet the train which was to take him up north, smiling, and muttering to himself, "Of course she'll come back. One can always get what one wants if one pays for it."

As soon as Junia reached her journey's end she took out the cheque given her by Mr Percy Smith, and unfolded it. She almost exclaimed aloud in her surprise as she read it; for it was a cheque for one hundred pounds.

"A bribe!" she thought. "But I will not be bribed."

Without another moment's reflection she tore the cheque in two, and enclosed the pieces in an envelope directed to Mr Percy Smith, requesting that the proper amount due to her—ten pounds—might be forwarded to Mrs Anderson's lodgings at his earliest convenience.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Honesty is the best policy," say the copybooks. Junia, sitting at a table covered with letters and agents' prospectuses, one day towards the end of January, repeated this adage to herself, wondering who could have formulised it. For to her experience honesty had been the very worst policy, and seemed likely to remain so.

To begin with. The widow lady at Richmond had been favourably impressed. All had gone smoothly. Junia's confession that she was a bad arithmetician was received with a pleasant laugh. She did not expect a governess to know absolutely everything, the lady said. Details as to salary were satisfactorily arranged, and Junia was on the point of taking her leave when a power (as it seemed) stronger than herself compelled her to utter the words, "I ought to tell you that I had scarlet fever in the autumn."

With that the lady's face changed. "In the autumn?" Then, recovering herself, she asked Junia's address, promising to write to her.

Junia was not surprised when the letter came. It was full of apologies and regrets at breaking the engagement just made; but she was a widow, the lady wrote, and her child the only thing that bound her to this world. And above all diseases she dreaded scarlet fever. If Miss Berrington were disengaged six months hence she would gladly hear from her again. Until that period was over she believed there was danger of infection.

Junia continued her quest. There was nothing for her to do but to continue it. At last she began to think that some fatality attended her. Either it was her black dress, or her white face, or her incapacity to take children on beyond the rudiments of arithmetic. Certain it was that while she was willing to do her best—to teach everything that she really knew—nobody seemed willing to let her try. Yet the advertisement-sheets of the daily papers were full of advertisements of people who wanted governesses; and Junia's name was by this time down on the books of half the governess agencies in the metropolis.

"The fact is, governesses are a drug in the market," said one agent, as he pocketed Junia's fee. "I wonder young ladies don't take up some other employment — I do indeed," said this person, who looked as if he made a comfortable income out of governesses' fees, and could afford to give the advice gratis.

January gave place to February, and Junia's courage and her money were fast ebbing away together. When she found herself obliged to write and ask Anna to again lend her some money, it seemed time to observe even a stricter economy than she had practised yet. She changed her lodgings, taking a single room at the top of a house in a seedy but respectable neighbourhood, inhabited by people just as seedy and just as respectable. She began, too, to live on Lenten fare, and to leave off advertising—answering, instead, the advertisements put in by other people. Every time the post passed the house, her heart began to beat with anxiety and expectation. For that small trifle of ten pounds which was owing to her when she left Nunehead had, it seemed, slipped the memories of both Mr and Mrs Percy Smith.

After some days, two letters came from persons whose advertisements she had answered.

The first purported to be from a widower, was written on paper stamped with the name of a fashionable club, and contained the usual inquiries. Junia turned the contents and the information given over in her mind. Three children, aged respectively, nine, ten, and twelve; good playing and singing a *sine quâ non;* sister-in-law of deceased wife residing in the house; wife dead two years; interview requested at the first-class waiting-room of the Charing Cross railway station. The salary named was a hundred a-year. This last was very tempting, yet Junia could not bring herself to like the idea of taking such a situation. The idea of an interview in the waiting-room of a crowded railway station was so repugnant to her that she laid the letter down, feeling as if it were impossible she should carry the matter further. She took up the second letter, which was written in a woman's hand, and which, although it contained an insidious offer of innocent enough employment, at once revealed to the pure mind of Junia that there were lower depths yawning for her than even those opened up by penury and hunger.

"Lord, deliver me from the wiles of the wicked," she prayed, falling on her knees by her bed, and lifting a white scared face to heaven.

But she started up again. "Uncle *must* help me now. Yes, I'll ask him to take me in till I can get a good situation. I'll put away my pride, and beg aunt to let me come. I'll not mind her tongue. To bear such a temper as hers is less terrible than the chance of stumbling on some such pitfall as this."

She sat down and wrote, sending a humble message to aunt Odynell through her uncle. "Aunt likes people to humble themselves before her," Junia thought, as she read it over. "Well, she will be pleased now, for I do not think I could be more humble. But it does not signify. The matter is to get out of this strait."

She put the letter in the post herself to make sure of its safety. If her uncle were in London she might get an answer the next day, and her troubles and difficulties would be over. Next day a letter came—a thick envelope directed in aunt Odynell's handwriting. There was something substantial inside. Had they sent her money? Junia thought, as she tore the letter open. It was her own letter, which had been opened, and returned without a word. . . .

In the evening the landlady knocked at the door. "Any letters?" said Junia, eagerly, as she opened it.

"No, but I've brought to-day's newspaper for you to look at. There are lots of advertisements for governesses. Perhaps you may find one to suit. You can keep the paper half an hour."

Junia began at the beginning of the sheet and read one advertisement after the other. One at the top of a column struck her more than the rest. It was an advertisement, not for a governess, but for a housemaid.

> WANTED, a clean, steady young person, age not less than 20. Wages £14, all found. Apply at 4 Westbourne Terrace, between the hours of 10 and 2.

"I am a clean, steady young person," thought Junia, "and I am not less than twenty, heigh-ho! Housemaids can scarcely be such a drug in the market as the governesses are just now, judging from the success I have met with. I'll try for the housemaid's place to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIX.

NUMBER 4 Westbourne Terrace was a freshly-painted house, with—as it appeared to Junia—new and handsome furniture. In the room to which she was shown there sat a pretty young lady who looked like a bride, with a dog on her lap; also an old lady—judging by the back of her cap, which was all Junia could see of her where she stood — who sat in a big arm-chair reading the morning paper.

The younger lady spoke, blushing as she did so. She asked Junia's name, her age, and one or two other questions, all with such hesitation and nervousness that Junia, to whom the position of seeker of a housemaid's place was at least as new and untried as was the young lady's as employer of a housemaid, began to feel herself the less nervous of the two, and to take courage thereupon, and to look, calmly observant, at the younger lady's face. So much sweetness and tenderness were written there that she felt herself in the presence of an unknown friend, and determined to tell her everything about herself without waiting to be questioned. But as sudden as the determination, came the frustration of it.

With a snap and a rustle the old lady laid down her paper and her spectacles, and, turning herself sharply round, stared at Junia.

"Who is that person, Amelia?"

"A person who has come about the housemaid's place, aunt."

"Oh! What is your name, young woman?"

"Junia Berrington."

"Junia—Junia. Humph! Outlandish, very! Where have you lived?"

"At Nunehead Park."

"Nunehead? Humph! I know the place. Amelia, don't you remember? The Warrens lived there till the old man's death, fifteen years ago."

"I don't remember, aunt; but it does not signify." She turned to Junia. "Are you accustomed to the handling of glass and china? For I have some of both, exceedingly valuable, which if broken could scarcely be replaced."

Junia, remembering the contents of a certain cabinet in her father's study, which it had been her pride and pleasure to keep in order, could answer truthfully that she both knew how to handle, and was aware of the value of, old glass and china.

"And you understand the arrangement of a room? Some housemaids don't care how they set the chairs and tables, even when one takes the trouble to show them how one likes them to be arranged," said the younger lady, plaintively.

"I think I understand," Junia began; but was cut short by the aunt, who broke in with, "What earthly good is it your making inquiries about a woman who is no more fit for a housemaid's place than I am?"

Junia turned to her and spoke.

"Madam," she said, in a low, weak voice, "I have been ill, and I do not look strong yet; but when I was in health I believe few housemaids had as much strength as I. What I want now is, not rest, but good nourishing food. With that, I should in a week be equal to much harder work than I am likely to have here."

"Humph!" said the old lady. "There's something in that. Do you hear that, Amelia? These people are far better off in service than they are in their own wretched homes, where they have not bread to eat. And yet, the impertinence one meets with!—the ingratitude!—the complaints about the kitchen meals! Young woman, I hope you are not in the habit of answering again when your mistress reproves you?"

"No, madam," Junia replied; but it was more a motion of the lips than a sound; for she had scarcely tasted food that day, and had walked for two hours to reach Westbourne Terrace. The fatigue, combining with the heat of the room, began to make her feel faint and giddy.

The old lady spoke again. "Humph! They all speak fair, of course. New brooms—humph! Are you steady? This is a strict house, remember. No flaunting dressing on Sundays allowed. And no followers."

"I have none," said Junia.

"Have you a written character with you?" the younger lady asked.

Junia's negative was drowned by the old lady's voice. "Written character! Stuff and nonsense! Amelia, never trust a written character. Write direct to the girl's mistress."

"I daresay that would be best. When could you come to me if I get a satisfactory answer?" the younger lady asked.

The old lady broke in, "Now don't have any one in till you have got rid of that good-for-nothing Elizabeth, who is enough to corrupt a whole tribe of servants."

"Elizabeth goes in a day or two, aunt."

"Ho!" Then to Junia, "Young woman, were you under-housemaid, or what, at Nunehead?"

"We went over that, aunt, while you were reading the newspaper. She has not been a housemaid, but she says she knows all about a housemaid's work."

The old lady wheeled her chair a yard nearer Junia, stared at her, and said with emphasis, "Young woman, it is my belief you are a runaway. You don't look like a servant. You don't look like a milliner's girl. I—I don't know what you look like, but I don't like the look of you. If you'll take my advice you will return at once to your friends."

"Aunt—aunt, dear, please," the bride interposed, blushing deeply.

Junia, remembering that it is a servant's place to wait till she is dismissed, stood still, venturing just to touch the back of a chair near her, for her giddiness was increasing, and the room seemed to dance up and down. She heard mutterings from the old lady, and saw the cap nodding close to the bride's pretty head, and heard disconnected words, as "Great goose—Amelia—suspicious—nothing to do with it."

But the bride having, in spite of her blushes and her nervousness, a will of her own, desired Junia to give her an address to which she might write if the answer from Nunehead proved satisfactory. Then, as it seemed, a happy thought struck Junia. Mrs Percy Smith might be travelling about with her son and daughter for change of air. A letter sent to her might remain unanswered for weeks; might even not be forwarded. Perhaps her own letter asking for the money due to her was even now lying on Mrs Percy Smith's boudoir table awaiting her return. As likely as not, a letter in the governess's handwriting was not thought worth forwarding. But the rector, Mr Pownall, would surely be at home, and he could answer as to her respectability, which was the main point in getting into this new situation. She therefore gave the rector's address, stating why she did so.

"Are you a regular communicant?" the old lady inquired.

"Yes," Junia answered. But she felt it was a question that no one had a right to ask.

"Humph! It all sounds very plausible; but if I were you, Amelia——"

"You can go now. I will write to you," said the bride.

That was Junia's last attempt. Her strength was no longer equal to long, fruitless walks through miles of street. She remained within, waiting. She had from the beginning paid her rent in advance. It was something to know that for one week she had a shelter and a bed to lie on.

Afterwards——?

CHAPTER XX

I.

From JUNIUS BERRINGTON *to* JUNIA BERRINGTON.

"SALT LICK POST-OFFICE, MOOSE COUNTY,
CANADA WEST, *November* 20.

"I AM alone in the shanty, — *my* shanty. The forest is behind me, the clearing in front; a long wide space stretching away to the south, where the snow lies in drifts and ridges some five feet deep. But the space, which looks so bare and desolate now, will be green with spring-wheat in its time. Next year a farther tract will be cleared: in time, if all be well with me, this forest will be fine arable land. How shall I ever thank you enough, dear Junia, for sending me that money! I can tell you now, what I could not tell you before, that I was beginning to lose heart. And for a working man to lose heart out here is as terrible an evil as his letting out the fire of his shanty on a mid-winter night.

"I have taken 160 acres of government-land; and I mean to call it 'Berrington.' It is twenty miles from the nearest store and post-office. By the time I am able to post this letter I daresay I shall find two or three of yours waiting for me. I moved here immediately after I got your letter with the money, in order that winter might not come upon me before I had put up a shanty, and got a little clearing done. It is well I came when I did, as winter has set in very early this year.

"I am writing with the pen that you gave me; your inkstand, and the pen-wiper that you worked, are by me; and my father's old writing-case is open before me. How dingy they all are, and how precious! But after chopping all the week the pen seems too small an instrument for my clumsy fingers. And whenever I sit down alone (as happens now and then on a Sunday) I am apt to fall asleep, which is not good for the despatch of letters.

"The men who are working here are gone to a shanty ten miles off, where a prayer-meeting is being held, and will not be back till to-morrow. The nearest church is close to the store and post-office; too far for people who have chopping and logging all the week. This is what would be called a lonely place; but I do not feel lonely. I trust in God, and am full of hope that this beginning will turn out well. I am glad you are not with me, for I could not bear you to lead the hard, rough life which falls to the settler's lot out here. Better far that you should be where you are, no material comfort wanting, whatever else may lack. Do not fret about me. I am less exposed to the cold now that I am my own master; and I believe, too, that I am becoming acclimatised. I thought at one time that I never should be. I do not mind things being rough. A fellow who turns squeamish just because things are rough is not worth his salt, here or anywhere else. One of these days I shall build a house; a nice log-house, comfortable enough for you to live in all the winter through; where you may sit by your fire of maple-logs, and laugh at the frost outside. —Your affectionate brother,

"JUNIUS BERRINGTON."

II.

From EDWARD BERRINGTON *to* JUNIA BERRINGTON.

TUESDAY. (*No address.*)

"MY DEAR JUNIA,—I am very sorry you are hard up; the fact is, I am so myself just at present, for three of our fellows are stopping here, and we have been getting through our tin like anything; and I was thinking of dropping you a line to ask you just to lend me a few pounds. I would ask uncle Odynell in a minute, for he's a regular brick, only he tipped me ten pounds last week, so I feel funky about asking. He might think I wanted to bleed him, you know. Why don't you write and ask him yourself? I think he likes you; at least I know he rowed me like anything last week for never writing to you. But the fact is, I've nothing to say; and you don't know any of the fellows in our form; and you don't understand cricket, of course; so I have nothing to tell you. Uncle talks about my going to Sandhurst, but I don't know whether I shall or not. Anna told me to write to her at the *poste restante,* Rome. She wrote about all the things she had been to see in Paris, and I daresay she was awfully jolly. I would send you her letter to read, but I have lost it.—I remain yours affectionately,

"EDWARD BERRINGTON.

"*P.S.*—Whatever you do, don't ask aunt Odynell to lend you money. She is the awfulest old screw going. She has never tipped me once since I have known her."

III.

From ANNA BERRINGTON *to* JUNIA BERRINGTON.

"MY DEAREST JUNIA,—I write in haste to say I have received your letter describing your arrival in London. How you could do such an unwise thing as to frighten the widow lady at Richmond by telling her you had had the scarlet fever, I cannot imagine. Just because of what Mr Percy Smith said! Surely your common-sense might have told you that it was impossible you should give the infection to any one after staying so many weeks at Dittisham. The sea air must have blown it all away, of course. Indeed, supposing such a very unlikely thing to have happened as for the scarlet fever to follow on your entrance into a family, I do not see that there would be any reason for blaming yourself, or supposing that *you* had brought it. There seems some strange twist or crook in your mind, my dearest Junia. You can look forward and see what is right for the future, on to A.D. 2000, but you never seem to know what is right for yourself at the present moment. In your place, it is your bounden duty to think of yourself, and not be cast hither and thither because of a random statement made by Mr Percy Smith, for no earthly reason that one can think of except to frighten you back to Nunehead. To be a slave to a tender conscience is, in my opinion, as bad as having no conscience at all. What you call conscientiousness I call tempting Providence.

"Mr Cyril Calvert is just come in, and the girls are talking so loud and so fast that I cannot write more, though I had a great deal to say. Paris is so delightful that I shall regret leaving it; but I hear that our destination is Rome, *viâ* Vienna, of all routes in the world! Pray take wine, and a tonic of some sort, and keep up your spirits, my dearest Junia. And above all things, let me know the instant you have got into a new place. The first time I can go out by myself I will go to a money-changer's and get an English bank-note to send you, for I should think you must be in want of money by this time.—Your ever affectionate sister, ANNA BERRINGTON."

"Well, doctor, any clue yet?" said a voice in a stage whisper.

"The letters are from two brothers and a sister. I gather that she is a companion or a governess."

"A lady born, I'm sure. Look at her hands."

"Ay, ay. Poor thing."

"That pocket-book might tell where she comes from."

The speaker, a stout florid woman with bright bead-like eyes and black wavy hair, sat by Junia's bed, chafing her hands, and fulfilling with alacrity all the directions given by Mr Marsden, M.R.C.S.,—Dr Marsden, as he was mostly called by the people of that seedy neighbourhood.

It was half-past eleven at night. For the first time since the building of that house a blazing fire burnt in the rusty grate of the back bedroom on the third floor. No such fire would ever have come there but by the doctor's order. Coffee steamed on the hob, also by the doctor's order, transmitted through the stout lady, Mrs Marville by name, to the landlady.

Mrs Marville was an ornament to the stage of the metropolis.

To put it plainly, she took the broad chambermaid and old woman business as efficiently as might be expected of a member of the company at that time performing at the Theatre Royal and National Amalgamated.

A low, unjustifiable, and at the same time providential, curiosity, had led Mrs Marville, on her way up to the third-floor front—where she nightly occupied a bedstead which became a fictitious cupboard by day—to peep into the silent back room. She looked at the bed, pried into the drawers and cupboards, spied an empty laudanum-bottle by the bedside, and drawing conclusions therefrom, sent at once for the bald-headed, spectacled practitioner who had attended her for her slight ailments. In plain vulgar language, the girl was dead. It was for Mr Marsden to clothe the bald conclusion in appropriately-veiled medical phraseology. But Mr Marsden, after careful examination, had pronounced that the girl was not dead.

Not quite dead. The landlady down-stairs fell a-weeping on hearing this. For her frontparlour lodger, an attorney's clerk, had assured her that in case of a death such as this, the law required a coroner's inquest, which, in the landlady's estimation, made a case which was bad enough ten times worse. As long as lodgers paid their rent they were free to do almost anything they liked in their apartments: laugh, weep, feed, starve—anything but die. For a death was unpleasant to the other lodgers, and might give the house a bad name; and the landlady, as was but natural, stood in dread of a rent-day coming, and an empty purse, to satisfy the demands of the collector. Such an occurrence as a coroner's inquest, she felt, would suffice to ruin her as a landlady altogether. Therefore, when she was informed that the lodger in the top back bedroom was not dead, she shed some natural tears of relief.

"Fancy that brute never coming near her!" Mrs Marville exclaimed, with a sudden access of indignation. "A selfish, soulless brute! Ugh!"

"Brute?" Mr Marsden inquired, mildly.

Oh, ah, you mean the landlady. My good soul, don't call her a brute."

"Why not? A spade's a spade, no matter how often you call it a rake. Yes, if it hadn't been for me, that brute down-stairs would have let her lie, till she wanted her week's rent. "Why didn't you go in?" says I. "Why should I?" says she.

"Ay, ay," said Mr Marsden, not heeding much; for he was examining the contents of the pocket-book.

Mrs Marville went on: "How one is mistaken about people! When I heard her speak to the landlady the day she came, I made sure she was a foreign actress, trying to get an engagement at the Opera. And you say she must have been a governess or something of that kind."

"Here are some photographs," said Mr Marsden.

They looked at them together, comparing them with the white, still features of the figure on the bed. There was one of June, marked, *J. B., Maple Valley, Hastings County;* one of

Edward and Anna; and a third of Junia and her brother, at the age of fourteen, taken at Florence.

"Twins, to be sure. That's the boy who wrote the letter from Canada. Junius and Junia, that's it. Doctor, she's opened her eyes!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Back through the valley of the shadow of death Junia came, with slow unwilling steps. For it was hard, too hard, to be forced to take up the burden of life so nearly dropped. Why could they not let her die? she asked herself, day by day, shrinking in spirit from what lay before her. For the inevitable necessity to work, which is a joy to the true-hearted worker, when it is a necessity supplied, is, in the nature of things, a misery to the would-be worker who stands idle. And this seemingly insuperable difficulty of finding work whereby she might live honestly began to oppress Junia more than ever, and keep her in a kind of waking nightmare.

"There are too many people in the world," she said—"too many pushing and struggling.

Some must go to the wall, and I think I must be one of them. You had better have let me die."

"Hush!" said Mrs Marville, sternly. "I wouldn't say so before; but now I tell you that it was a very wicked thing, your taking that laudanum. You'd got no business to commit suicide. Nobody has."

A faint colour played on Junia's pale cheek. "You quite mistake," she said. "No one who is loved as well as I am loved by the few who are dear to me could wish to commit suicide. I found the laudanum in the cupboard, left, I suppose, by some former lodger. And I took some—just a little—because I had no money left to buy food,—and I thought it might keep me asleep till my letters came. For I was expecting money to be sent me daily. That is all."

As soon as Junia was sufficiently recovered she went to the house in Westbourne Terrace where she had applied for a housemaid's place. Mrs Marville, having no rehearsal that day, offered to accompany her.

"Though what can possess you," she said, "to try for a housemaid's place, I cannot tell. To begin with, you are far too good-looking. Then, you can sing and play, and you tell me you can paint, and you have the languages. Your education must have cost hundreds of pounds."

"I know it did. Yet, in spite of all I have spent on advertisements and agents' fees, I am no nearer getting a governess's situation than on the day I came up to London. I was told that governesses were a drug in the market, and I suppose it is true."

"You said you had relations who were well off. You should apply to them."

"I did. And my letter was returned."

No more was said till they reached Westbourne Terrace. Then Mrs Marville told Junia she would come inside and wait in the hall. "I suppose they'll let me sit down," she said. "And if that old lady in the cap is very hard upon you, my love, you'll know you have a friend close by, and that will keep up your spirits."

After a few moments' delay (for the footman was not certain whether a housemaid had been engaged, and went to inquire) Junia was informed that Mrs Porter would see her. Mrs Porter was the old lady in the cap. She sat in the same room, in the same chair, and was (apparently) reading the same newspaper. The lap-dog jumped up in her lap, and barked furiously. The younger lady was not visible.

"I called," said Junia, seizing her opportunity when the dog had barked itself into exhaustion, "to inquire whether the lady here was yet suited with a housemaid."

Mrs Porter looked at her so steadily through her spectacles that Junia felt herself colour beneath the scrutiny. "You are the young woman," said Mrs Porter, "who gave your name as Junia Berrington?"

"Yes."

Mrs Porter cleared her throat. "Junia Berrington, I consider it providential that you should have called here again. My niece, Mrs Fisher, wrote to the clergyman of Nunehead, and the answer was so unsatisfactory that she could not, in my opinion, have allowed you to become an inmate of this family. After reading Mr Pownall's letter, I felt surprised that you should have attempted to enter a respectable house like this on false pretences."

"Madam," said Junia, endeavouring to speak calmly and respectfully, "am I to understand that Mr Pownall brings some charge against me?"

Mrs Porter replied, taking a letter from the rack on the chimney-piece, and quoting from it, "He says you filled the situation of governess in the family of Mrs Percy Smith for some time."

"That is quite true. I am in mourning for one of my pupils, who died of scarlet fever. I took the disease from her."

Mrs Porter nodded. So far, Mr Pownall's letter corroborated the young woman's statement.

"But," Junia continued, "I cannot see how this should be brought against me—should constitute a charge."

"Not this alone. But this, together with the fact of your endeavouring to gain entrance into a respectable family as housemaid, does constitute a grave charge — that of your representing yourself to be what you are not. And, joining these facts to the inferences I cannot but draw from the clergyman's letter, I feel it a Christian duty to warn you most seriously——"

"Madam," Junia exclaimed, "let us keep to facts! Did I not say to Mrs Fisher that I had not been a housemaid, but that I understood a housemaid's work? That is strictly true. Mrs Fisher will not find her rooms the worse cleaned because an educated person cleans them. What law is there to prevent a woman who has been a governess from becoming a housemaid?"

"There is none, of course. But it is such an extraordinary thing that a governess should wish to become a housemaid, that I naturally—and all the more after Mr Pownall's letter—view the attempt with suspicion."

"Will you let me read Mr Pownall's letter?" Junia asked.

"You can scarcely be so ignorant of its contents as you appear. Surely your own conscience must accuse you. Here is the letter, however."

Junia took it, and read it with a burning face.

"Madam," Mr Pownall wrote, "in answer to your letter of inquiry, I beg to state that a young person of the name of Berrington was residing until lately as governess in the family of Mrs Percy Smith of Nunehead Park. I believe she filled her position to that lady's satisfaction. I have also been given to understand that she made herself exceedingly useful in the family during a period of sickness in the house last autumn, when Mr and Mrs Percy Smith were called upon to part with one of their children. Personally I can speak to her regular attendance at the parish church, and to her being a regular communicant. I am not aware of the reason of her leaving the family.—I am, madam, your obedient servant, THOMAS POWNALL."

Then came a postscript, written on the page opposite.

"Since writing the above, I have had an interview with Miss Smith (the sister of Mr Percy Smith), during which Miss Berrington's name was mentioned by me, with a view to know whether the former governess and the person mentioned in your note were identical. I regret to say that Miss Smith (a most active and zealous worker in the parish) does not consider that Miss Berrington's character will bear inspection. She declares that, speaking with a personal knowledge of certain facts, this (to her) unprecedented circumstance of Miss Berrington, a governess till lately in a wealthy family, seeking a situation as domestic servant, is fraught with suspicion. She assures me that Miss Berrington left Nunehead in the teeth of Mrs Percy Smith's wish to keep her and raise her salary. As to the occurrences of which she was an eyewitness, and which help her to form her estimate of Miss Berrington's character, she declares that her reluctance to mention them is insurmountable. I regret to be obliged to say anything detrimental to the young person's character; but as Miss Smith's communication is important, and my letter is not yet gone, I feel bound to insert it.—T. P."

Junia laid the letter down, and stood for a moment with her hands tightly clasped together. Only by the nervous twitching of her chin could Mrs Porter have seen (had she cared to look) that the would-be housemaid was not altogether unmoved by the perusal. "This letter is directed to Mrs Fisher?" she said at last.

"To my niece. Yes."

"May I speak to Mrs Fisher?"

"She cannot see any one. If you wish to say anything you can say it to me."

"Then," said Junia, "I ask to have that letter given me, that I may go to Mr Pownall with it in my hand, and force Miss Smith—Miss Kate, that is—to say, before him, and me, and Mr and Mrs Percy Smith, as plainly as words can say, what are the facts which she has such an insurmountable reluctance to speak of. I am not afraid."

Mrs Porter replied promptly, "Give me back that letter. I cannot have any unpleasantness arising between my niece and these persons—persons no doubt possessing position and influence—for the sake of a young woman of doubtful character."

"I am not a young woman of doubtful character! I left Nunehead because the master of the house was impertinent to me, and I valued my character too highly to risk a repetition of the impertinence."

"Ah!" The exclamation carried its adverse verdict to Junia's ears. Her candour had done her more harm than good.

"A modest woman can always guard herself from insult," said Mrs Porter.

"So I thought, till—till— Ah!" Junia cried, with a sob, "you don't believe me! What can I say? What can I do?"

"I will tell you," Mrs Porter replied. "Forsake your present way of life. Resolve to amend before it is too late. If you will promise to do this, I, for my part, will assist you to the utmost of my ability. There are places where good women devote themselves to the bringing back of those who have wandered. To one of these I will procure you admission, if——"

Junia's pale face turned paler. She held up her hand. "Stop!" she cried; "stop! I am poor. I have to work for my living. I know what it is to be cold and tired, and faint for lack of food, and near death from starvation, because Mrs Percy Smith has neglected to pay me what she owes me. But I am a woman of birth and breeding for all that. And I am a woman of blameless character, whether you believe it or not; and I will not be insulted. Good morning."

CHAPTER XXII.

Forgetful of all except the insult she had received, Junia hastily left the house.

When she had reached the end of the terrace she remembered Mrs Marville, and stopped. As the latter approached, Junia walked quickly up to her and caught hold of her hand. "What can a woman do," she asked, trembling with anger, "when a woman insults her? Tell me."

"Give her tit for tat," was the ready reply.

"That is impossible," said Junia.

"I know of no other way. But tell me what she said to make you so angry."

As Junia recounted the interview Mrs Marville became excited. By the time the recital was finished she was more demonstratively angry than Junia. If calling a spade a spade could have brought Junia redress, she would not have had far to seek for it that day.

"Was I not right when I said you had better have let me die?" said Junia at last. "I shall never get another situation, even as domestic servant. My good name is gone—blown away by a cruel woman's breath."

"Hush, my love, hush! Don't say that."

"But it is true."

"No, no, my love; not so bad as that," said Mrs Marville. But she drew Junia's arm within hers, and patted her hand under her shawl as they walked on; a mute expression of sympathy which calmed Junia more than the best-chosen words could have done.

The way was long. Once Junia turned giddy and faint, and was obliged to stop by the window of a tobacconist's shop. As they walked on she said, "If I asked for a situation in such a shop as that, would they want to send to Nunehead for my character?"

"You would not really try for a situation behind a counter?" said Mrs Marville, with a look of astonishment at the delicate, high-bred face of her companion.

"Why not? I would do anything to get honest bread to eat. But what am I saying? A shopwoman should be a good arithmetician, and that's my weak point. It would never do."

"I should say not, my love," Mrs Marville remarked. Instead of pursuing the topic which was uppermost in Junia's mind, she endeavoured to turn her thoughts in a different direction by making her notice the varied splendours of the shop-windows. Junia saw the attempt, and supposed that Mrs Marville was weary of her concerns—concerns which had in themselves no special interest except to herself, and might for the present be summed up in the cry, "Nothing to do!" It was but natural, Junia thought. Mrs Marville was a successful actress. How should she understand the feeling of such an one as herself, who had tried so many things and had always failed?

When they reached the door of their

lodging, Mrs Marville bade Junia go in and prepare her a cup of tea. She had an errand, but would be back immediately. As soon as the door had closed on Junia, she hastened to Mr Marsden's house.

"What's the matter?" Mr Marsden cried, as Mrs Marville bounced into the surgery.

"The matter! Quick! give me something to send that girl to sleep and keep her safe, that she mayn't go to the river while I'm at the theatre to-night," was Mrs Marville's answer, delivered in a violent hurry.

The doctor demurred. "I don't give sleeping-draughts hap-hazard. What makes you ask for one?"

"All I know is, that if you don't let me have it, I'll get one somewhere else. Unless I know she's safe I shall never get through my piece to-night. And there's a vast deal of business in it, I can tell you, besides one scene with the manager, which I hate."

"Sit down and tell me all about it—the girl, I mean," said Mr Marsden.

Mrs Marville did so. And Mr Marsden,

with his elbows on his desk, shook his head and said, when she had done, "The way of the world, Mrs Marville; the way of the world. I'm sorry for the poor young thing. I am indeed."

"And you'll let me have the sleeping-draught, doctor?"

"Under the circumstances—yes."

"I was in two minds," Mrs Marville pursued, "as to leaving her. However, I set her something to do for me that will employ her till I get back. She's always pleased to do any little thing for me, so I hoped that would keep her safe for a while. I thought that, of the two, the greatest risk lay in the long, lonely evening after I'm gone to the theatre; when she'll have nothing to do but watch the fire, and listen to the church clocks, and the rats and mice in the old walls. And with nothing pretty or pleasant to think of. Eh, doctor? I shouldn't like it myself."

"Just so," said Mr Marsden, who had already begun to compound the sleeping-draught.

Five minutes later, Mrs Marville was hurrying homewards with the medicine-bottle under her shawl. As she opened the door of the room—not without some slight misgiving—Junia, who was on her knees before the fire with a toasting-fork in her hand, said, reproachfully, "How long you have been!"

"Thank goodness!" Mrs Marville exclaimed, as she threw off her bonnet and shawl, and sank into the nearest chair. When she had got back her breath she went up to Junia and kissed her. It was a pretext for examining the expression of her eyes and face. There was no anger in her countenance now; only deep dejection. She said, with a sigh, "If I could but get down to Nunehead, and make Miss Kate speak out! But Nunehead is nearly sixty miles from here, and I am penniless." Then remembering that Mrs Marville might be tired of the subject, she stopped.

"Yes, my love. I can't say I see how it's to be done," Mrs Marville said. She drank her tea in silence. She was in truth thinking about Junia's concerns all the while, though Junia did not know it. The idea of going to Nunehead, even if she had the money to go, appeared so preposterous to Mrs Marville, that she wished earnestly to put it out of Junia's head. "What a child she must be," thought the good woman, "not to see at once that by making Miss Kate—as she calls her—speak out, she'll only turn Mrs Percy Smith into an enemy! Of course she's bound to stand by her husband, and make believe that if he kissed the governess, 'twas the governess's fault. Lor! the humbug there is in this blessed old world! And the aggravations some people have got to put up with! If it had been I, now, I'd have been in the river by this time. I wouldn't have stood all that goading on every side." Such were Mrs Marville's thoughts as she drank her tea in silence. After a while she said, "My love, I've a plan for getting you something to do."

"A plan!" Junia exclaimed. "Dear Mrs

Marville, tell me quick what it is." And already the dejection was gone, and a flush of hope coloured her pale cheeks.

"'Tis a plan that never seems to have occurred to you. What do you say to trying the stage?"

"The stage!" Junia's countenance fell.

"Yes. What do you say to coming out as my pupil?"

"I have no vocation for the stage," said Junia. That she had the greatest repugnance to the idea she did not say. "I am sure I have no vocation for the stage," she repeated, feeling that such an answer was conclusive.

"Vocation is a fiddlestick," said Mrs Marville. "Gifts are better than vocations. You have gifts."

"What gifts?" Junia asked, wondering.

"Voice, one; appearance, two; manner, three. Trust to my experience. I know what I am talking about."

"But I have never tried to act. I have never even wished to try."

"So much the better. I shall have no bad tricks to eradicate before I begin to teach you in downright good earnest."

Junia remained silent.

"Is there any other occupation you think you could try that would suit you better?" Mrs Marville asked.

"I know of none. Nothing that I can do—least of all that which I can do well—will give me bread to eat."

"Well then——"

Junia made an effort. "The truth is," she said, colouring with a painful sense that what she was about to say might be offensive to Mrs Marville, "all the people among whom I was brought up, or among whom I have lived since, have believed that it is not possible for an actress to be—a good woman. Whether they were right or not I never asked. I never thought much about it, one way or another: except that it seemed to me a pity that it was so. Perhaps that may have been the reason why I never wished to try the stage,—never even thought about it. But"—she knelt down and took Mrs Marville's hand—"perhaps it is not true. For you are good: anybody could tell that. And how good you have been to me! Tell me, can a woman be—not only good—but respected and thought well of on the stage? I don't ask for myself alone, but for the sake of the few who love me, though I am so far away from them."

Mrs Marville kissed the girl's forehead. "My love," she said, "I'll tell you the truth, as if you were my daughter."

"Ah yes," said Junia, eagerly.

"On the stage, according to my experience, if a woman keeps herself to herself she's pretty sure not to be molested. The actors have their own business to mind: love-making in public doesn't at all conduce to love-making in private, but rather the contrary. On the other hand, if an actress wishes to be bad she has plenty of opportunity of showing what her wishes are. My advice to you, my dear, is, to try the stage for six months. If, at the end of that period, you feel that it does not suit you, you can advertise for a situation of some sort, and I'll engage to give you an excellent character."

"I can but try," said Junia, after a pause. "The chief thing for me to think of is, how to get my bread. But I tell you candidly, Mrs Marville, that I only accept your proposal because I see absolutely no other way open to me. I believe in vocation, if you don't."

"Never mind about vocation. You do exactly as I bid you; and see if that doesn't do instead. There, that's a bargain." And Mrs Marville sealed it with a kiss.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT uphill work her pupil found it Mrs Marville never knew. Though Junia's head ached daily with the effort of learning by rote—though her heart quailed before her teacher's sharp speech and peremptory manner (for Mrs Marville the teacher was as severe as Mrs Marville the nurse was tender)—though her mind shrank with unreasoning aversion from things theatrical,—she submitted, without murmur or remonstrance, to Mrs Marville's will—as implicitly, indeed, as though that lady had been her mother superior, and the study of distasteful parts an exercise belonging to her noviciate. Day after day she conned her task. Night after night she attended Mrs Marville to the theatre, dressed her, carried her basket to and fro, stitched at her wardrobe, went her errands, — was tirewoman, secretary, handmaiden by turns,—patient and faithful always, therein obeying a law of her own nature.

"I have only promised for six months," was the thought which upheld her when she was tired and downcast, and her head ached more than usual. Easter was coming, and Easter would bring back Anna to England. For Anna was at Rome; and Easter at Rome meant flight from Rome immediately afterwards of all tourists and chance residents. The English bank-note which (after a little delay) Anna had sent her had been in justice (as Junia thought) transferred to Mrs Marville, as part payment of the expenses caused by her taking charge of her. Junia's first thought had been to use it for going down to Nunehead; but a second thought, quickly succeeding, made Mrs Marville the rightful owner of it. "I was an hungered, and she took me in," thought Junia. To Anna she had written, saying that she had been in great straits, but had met with a kind friend. Into all the painful particulars she had not entered, lest the pleasure of her sister's trip should be marred. That Anna, with her cleverness, her wonderful tact, and general foresightedness, would see at once what kind of employment was most suitable to her, Junia never doubted, still less that Anna would easily find such employment for her. Meanwhile, she felt bound honestly to try Mrs Marville's plan, and leave Mrs Marville to find out (as she must), at the end of the six months, that her pupil had no aptitude for the stage.

On Junia's agreeing to become her pupil, Mrs Marville had, without loss of time, advertised for an engagement in a spring and summer theatre, to include Junia and herself. One day she returned from rehearsal in a state of great excitement. The second walking-lady had been suddenly taken ill, and the manager was at his wits' end to supply her place for that evening.

"It's no joke," Mrs Marville explained, "to change a piece which is having a good run. I can tell you the governor was in anything but a pleasant temper. He was a little better after I told him I had a pupil who could take the part creditably——"

"But that is not true. How could you say so?" Junia asked.

"Because I wasn't such a fool as to let such a chance as this slip through my fingers," was the prompt reply. "Here's a copy of the piece. Sit down and study Princep's part, while I look out a dress for you."

Junia did as she was desired. The piece was entitled 'Madame de Chaumont's Crime,' and was described as a sensational melodrama. To Junia's unsophisticated mind it was a mass of rubbish from beginning to end. There were what Mrs Marville and the ladies and gentlemen of the theatre called fine situations, where (as it seemed to Junia) vulgarity and affectation reached a culminating point, made visible to a rapturous audience by means of a ray of lime-light thrown on the principal characters, who stood as if transfixed, in attitudes which no sane man or woman would assume for an instant off the stage.

Mrs Marville, who had been rummaging

drawers and boxes and cupboards in vain, now interrupted Junia's study.

"I must get you a dress," she said. "I have nothing here that is fit for you to wear."

"But the expense!" Junia remonstrated. "And perhaps after to-night I shall never want it again. Miss Princep may be well again to-morrow."

"Hope she won't," Mrs Marville muttered. Then aloud, "Even if 'twere so, it would be better not to appear in the piece at all unless you dressed the part well. Appearance is everything, particularly a first appearance. It is lucky I have not yet dipped into that ten pounds you gave me."

She went out, and was gone more than two hours. She came back with a milliner's basket, spread the contents out on the bed, and bade Junia come and look.

Junia stood silent and aghast at such improvidence.

"No workman can work well without proper tools," said Mrs Marville. "To-night I intend you to be a sample of my handiwork.

I intend you to do me credit, and lay the foundation of your own fortune — and mine too, perhaps."

The ladies' dressing-room that evening was the scene of much animated conjecture. All knew of the second walking-lady's illness, but none knew of the substitute provided. Mrs Marville had given Junia a piece of advice on setting out: "From the moment you enter the theatre to the moment the curtain drops, have your mind in your business, and in nothing else." Intent on obeying faithfully her friend's directions, Junia remained unconscious of the whispers and pantomimic signs of surprise on either side of her.

"So that's the lady who is to take Princep's part," said the leading lady to Mrs Marville, as the latter was taking a last look at the glass before leaving the dressing-room.

"It is, ma'am," the old woman replied. (She was dressed this evening as a very old woman, with long mittens, high-heeled shoes, a train, and a mob-cap *à la* Mother Hubbard.) "My pupil, ma'am."

"Thought she was your maid. 'Pon my word I did," said the leading lady, between whom and Mrs Marville there was a feud dating from last boxing-night.

"You were mistaken, ma'am," Mrs Marville replied, as she intensified her left eyebrow.

"How you find time for pupils I'm sure I can't tell. Pray, are your terms high?"

"Was you asking with a view to availing yourself of a spare hour? I would make a reduction for a professional, of course. I think I could teach you a thing or two," said Mrs Marville, composedly. Then, gathering up her train, she beckoned to Junia to follow her, amidst the titters of the various occupants of the dressing-room, who had gathered round to enjoy the sparring-match.

"Yes, yes, laugh as you please, my beauties," said Mrs Marville, in high delight at the success of her encounter. "'Tit for tat' is my motto. It has been my motto ever since I began life, and it shall be my motto as long as I'm spared breath to speak. As if I was going to be put upon by a woman who can't make a decent exit! Which is what she can't," she whispered confidentially to Junia.

Behind the scenes they went, where the stage-manager was giving directions to the scene-shifters. Taking advantage of the first pause, Mrs Marville introduced Junia as her pupil, who was to take Miss Princep's part. The stage-manager stared at her, shook hands; said he hoped there would be no fagging, but it was rather risky, and turned on his heel.

"He does not think I shall succeed," said Junia, who in her heart did not think she should either.

"Confound his impudence!" said Mrs Marville. "He spoke like that because he had somebody he wished to recommend, and I was beforehand with him. Now my love"—and Mrs Marville became excited and anxious in her manner as she spoke—"I hear the governor coming. Stand a bit to one side, that the light may fall on you—so; and whatever you do, don't look frightened. And mind you, curtsey."

But it was not in Junia's power not to look frightened. Insensibly, but inevitably, she was falling under the influence of the place. The manager was the *bête noire* of the ladies' dressing-room. There was a well-authenticated legend of his having sworn at a lady who was now doing the leading business at the Theatre Royal, Bristol. A smile or a nod from him was to the ladies of the company as a smile or a nod from an autocrat to the ladies of an imperial court. Within those dingy walls he was powerful to make or to mar; to bind or to loose. When he said, "Let it be," it was. When he was gay, the company broke forth into smiles. When he frowned, the company shook in their shoes, from the leading lady downwards. As a bystander, Junia had pitied these poor souls in their bondage. Now she trembled, feeling by anticipation the yoke on her own neck.

She was dressed this evening in a sky-blue silk with a long train. She held a spangled fan in her hand; a gorgeous opera-cloak hung on her arm. Her hair, released from its everyday confinement, flowed in a shower of golden brown over her shoulders. Artificial roses crowned her head; artificial roses glowed on her cheeks. The manager, a tall man with bushy hair, dyed moustache, and glittering scarf-pin, strolled up with his hands in his pockets, and came to a standstill before her.

"My pupil, sir," said Mrs Marville, in her most propitiatory tones, while Junia curtseyed.

"Ah! Turn round, my dear," said the manager.

Junia obeyed, her cheeks tingling at the familiar address.

"Well," said the manager, after considering for a moment, "if she only acts as well as she looks, she'll do." He walked away whistling, leaving Mrs Marville in a state of ecstasy.

"My love," she whispered, "you've made a hit. The governor is a man of very few words. It was ten to one that he'd pass you without deigning to speak. Now from this moment everything depends on yourself. For heaven's sake be composed, and try to do me credit!"

"I will," said Junia. And, to Mrs Marville's astonishment, she retreated to a dark corner, and stood for a space with folded hands and bowed head.

"Well," thought Mrs Marville, "that beats everything. She's saying her prayers!"

The manager was sufficiently pleased with the pupil's performance on the first night to signify to Mrs Marville that she might continue to take Miss Princep's part until that lady was well enough to appear.

"Which I hope she won't till the theatre closes," Mrs Marville said afterwards. And to Junia's reproachful look she replied, "Every dog has his day."

Junia was more surprised perhaps than any one in the theatre to hear that this first appearance had not made clear her utter incompetency. When she had quite realised the fact that her first appearance was not to be her last—that the performance of this one night was to be repeated perhaps an indefinite number of nights—she shivered and trembled, and grew hot and cold, with stage-fright. Mrs Marville wasted no sympathy on her.

"Stage-fright is like the measles, my love," she said. "The sooner you get it over the better."

But with Junia it did not seem as if it were a malady to be got over very quickly. The succeeding nights were more terrible to her than the first. Nevertheless, there was a certain amount of self-possession which never deserted her, and which, frightened as she might be, kept her from forgetting her cues or Mrs Marville's directions. The stage-manager began to notice this quality—nothing more or less than presence of mind—in Mrs Marville's grave, silent pupil. He said one night—it was by way of encouragement—"Well, we haven't had any fagging yet." But when the ladies of all degrees belonging to the company saw that the pupil was kept on, they declared that it was because of her splendid dress.

"It was like Marville, wasn't it?" said the leading lady to the juvenile lady, "to bring her pupil out in sky-blue silk and pink roses, all brand-new, at the end of the season, when everybody's dresses are getting shabby? The governor wouldn't have let her come on a second night if it hadn't been for the dress. We all know that."

"It was all because of the dress, of course," was the general verdict. Mrs Marville, overhearing the general verdict, bethought herself of the strange scene she had witnessed—of the folded hands and the bowed head in that dark corner.

"I wonder if it was *that* which kept her so cool and steady on her first night?" the experienced actress said to herself. "Whatever it was, it was not her own appearance. I'd take my oath she never once thought how she was looking. That's a fault she'll have to mend. But—Lor-a-mercy!—what a sight 'twould be if all the company went to prayers before the curtain rose for a new piece!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE morning the post brought two letters for Junia. One, in Mrs Percy Smith's handwriting, sent on from Dittisham, contained the cheque for ten pounds which she had been owing Junia so long. There were but a few lines, containing a half-apology for not having settled the matter before. She had, indeed, an idea that she had paid Miss Berrington in full, but took her word for it that she did not. She had been travelling about so much for her own health and her children's, that these small matters had slipped her memory. She was sorry to lose Miss Berrington's services, but hoped that she would better herself. At the same time, she thought it unreasonable — to say the least—of her to leave, in such a peremptory way, a family which was quite ready to remunerate her services according to her deserts.

"If I could but go down to Nunehead!" Junia thought, as she looked at the cheque. But, surely, the ten pounds belonged to Mrs Marville, who had bought her that handsome dress. And into Mrs Marville's pocket it went. The other letter was from Anna, dated from Mrs Odynell's house in Grosvenor Square, desiring Junia, in a few hurried words, to meet her at the confectioner's in Vere Street at twelve o'clock the next day. Anna's postscript, "I have left the Calverts abroad," filled Junia with misgivings.

There was no rehearsal the next day. Junia therefore was free to keep the appointment. She reached the confectioner's just as Anna, in the most tasteful of Paris toilets, stepped from a cab at the door.

"How pretty you are!" was the elder sister's greeting as they met at the shop-door. Anna, full of smiles and dimples, graceful as a fairy, and dressed as if a fairy godmother had presided at her toilet, did not look in the least like a governess out of a situation. But Anna's eye at once rested on Junia's dress with disapproval. "My dearest Junia," she began, in a tone of gentle remonstrance, as soon as they were seated together in the private dining-room, "Why do you dress so shabbily? It is such a mistake, dear."

"Did you not get the letter I sent while you were at Rome?" Junia asked.

"Yes; and it made me quite ill. I used to lie awake, night after night, thinking of you."

"Dear Anna, I'm sorry," Junia murmured.

"Never mind. I was worried more because I was away from London and unable to help you than for anything else. Now I'm back again, and ready to help you. As soon as we can get you a new dress—which we will obtain presently, next door—we'll see about a situation. I intend to get you something good this time; some situation where you will not have to grind like a white slave from year's end to year's end. But," Anna continued, impressively, "you must look different, my dearest Junia. With your present demeanour (joined to your present dress) neither I nor any one else could get you a situation worth a hundred a-year. Look prosperous, my dear; look happy. And then prosperity and happiness will come to you, as they have come to me."

"You don't know everything that has happened since I left Nunehead," said Junia, feeling very grubby and dingy by contrast with Anna's brightness of face and attire. "I have a good deal to tell besides what I told you in my letter."

"Let me tell my news first," said Anna. "I told you that I had left the Calverts."

"Yes, and I began to feel anxious. Suppose you should find a new situation as hard to get as I found it?"

"I have found a situation."

"Already? You lucky girl!"

"Yes—I am going to be married," said Anna, laughing at her sister's look of surprise. "It is true. Cyril—Mr Cyril Calvert, that is—Cyril and I arranged it all in the catacombs.

And I am to be married from uncle Odynell's immediately after Easter."

So much had Anna to tell of the rise, progress, and *dénouement* of Mr Cyril Calvert's love, that an hour had gone by, and the private dining-room was invaded by other seekers for refreshments before Anna had told half her story. As, at that time of day, privacy was no longer possible, Anna proposed that they should walk (before buying Junia's new dress) to a shop in New Bond Street, where a *carte de visite* of the Reverend Cyril Calvert might in all probability be seen in the window. Thither they bent their steps, and had the satisfaction of seeing, not one, but a whole series of photographs of the reverend gentleman: in a *biretta*, and out of a *biretta*; with a book open, and with a book shut; in a meditative attitude, and in a benedictory attitude,—quite taking the shine out of various bishops, deans, and canons, who were in no particular attitude at all.

When a photograph had been bought for Junia (and Anna found it difficult to decide which of the attitudes was the most attractive) the latter proposed going back to Oxford Street to see about Junia's dress. Then Junia felt that the time was come to tell Anna of the step she had been forced to take, and that the telling would become no easier for being postponed.

"Never mind the dress," she said; "I want to tell you about myself first. Let us go down into the Green Park, where it is quiet."

Anna hailed a passing cab, which quickly set them down at the entrance.

"There," she said, shaking out her flounces as they descended the steps; "that is better than walking. I expect Cyril this evening, and I don't want to be tired and headachy, just for the hour he will be with me. It is wonderful how he is looked up to! All sorts of people come to ask his advice, and he is overwhelmed with letters. He is but a curate; yet he is much more thought of than the rector of the church where he does duty at present. Indeed many people look on him quite as a saint, although he is so young. How ever he came to fall in love with *me* I cannot imagine."

This speech of Anna's helped Junia to say what she had to say. Sitting on a bench under a budding tree, a few sheep grazing near, and the roar of Piccadilly in the distance, she told Anna in the fewest possible words what had happened to her since leaving Nunehead.

Anna stopped her before she had finished.

"Junia," she said, speaking low, as if fearful of being heard by the nurserymaids sauntering on the broad path, "you must have been in terrible difficulty. You must have been next door to——"

"Starvation" was the word her lips moved to speak, but she could not say it. It was Junia who said it for her.

"Yes, it came actually to that at last." But Anna's distress was so great when she had spoken, that Junia had not the heart to go on.

Anna wept and sobbed as if a dire calamity had overtaken her. "That I should have sat down to a dainty dinner day after day—while you——"

"Dear Anna," said the elder sister, tenderly, "do not be so distressed. That trouble is all over now; and, as I told you, I found a kind friend, who has taken care of me ever since."

"I should like to thank her," said Anna, brushing away her tears. "Where does she live?"

"Where I live; that is, we live together now. It is a dingy place near Red Lion Street. She is all that is good and kind—but—you would not call her a gentlewoman."

But Anna put aside this drawback with a wave of her little hand. "She has been a friend to you, Junia—that is enough for me. I could love any one who had been kind to you."

"So kind! so generous!" said Junia, all restraint vanishing under the influence of Anna's awakened sympathy. "She never lets me feel how much I am indebted to her. She is an actress, and she has taken me as her pupil for six months; and I am now actually on the stage."

"The stage!" Anna repeated, in a terror-stricken voice. "What are you saying?"

"I tried everything, and nothing succeeded; and—I can scarcely believe it myself—this seems as if it might succeed," said Junia, in a tone of apology. "Anna, don't look at me so, for pity's sake!" she cried. For Anna had moved away from her side, and was regarding her with a look in which anger and fear and perplexity were strangely mingled.

"What else could I have done? I wanted to get bread—bread to eat!" Junia cried.

"What else? You could have gone straight back to Nunehead. Had you taken my advice you would never have left Nunehead."

"If you had been there, perhaps you would not say so."

"Well then! could you not write to uncle Odynell? I know he would have taken you in."

"I did write, and asked him most humbly, and sent a humble message to aunt Odynell; and the next day my letter came back, re-directed by aunt herself—and it had been opened!"

"O Junia!" exclaimed Anna.

"And," Junia continued, "I had only asked to be taken in until I could get a good situation. For you know what a life it would be, to be the unpaid companion of Mrs Odynell. You yourself could not put up with that. You have said so many a time."

Anna was silent for a moment; then she exclaimed, as if Junia's misfortune had presented itself under a new aspect, "Starvation and the stage! To what depths have you fallen!"

"There are lower depths," said Junia.

Anna looked at her for an instant, and then averted her eyes, shuddering. Nor did Junia venture to speak again while her sister kept silence. As she sat, looking blankly at the dirty sheep scattered over the grass, with a surging in her ears that echoed (as it seemed) the ever-increasing roar of distant carriage-wheels, she felt again, with all the fresh bitterness of a new conviction, that life was too hard for her; that she had missed the right path, if indeed there were any appointed path for her; and that it were better for her to die, and make no more mistakes, and cause no more anger.

CHAPTER XXV.

But Anna, suddenly rising, said, "Junia, will you for once be guided by me?"

"Yes, oh yes," was the willing answer.

"Can you hold your tongue?"

"Yes," said Junia, wondering.

"Then come with me." And Anna began walking rapidly towards the Park entrance, explaining her plan as she went.

It was this: Junia was at once to sever all connection with Mrs Marville, and was to take possession of a lodging in a street near Grosvenor Square, to which Anna would introduce her. Then Anna would bring uncle Odynell and Mr Cyril Calvert to see her; Junia to appear in the character of an invalid just arrived from Dittisham.

"You forget," said Junia, "that I wrote to uncle Odynell, and my letter was returned. So they know I was in London then."

"That was altogether aunt's doing, I feel sure. Uncle Mulgrave never saw or heard of that letter. As for her, she will never inquire what has become of you since; and you look delicate enough to pass for an invalid, heaven knows!" said Anna. "I shall tell uncle Odynell in confidence why you left Nunehead. He will be very angry that people should have been impertinent to his niece; he will not like your being in a lodging so near to his big house; and the end will be that you will be invited to Grosvenor Square. Once there, I'd stay, if I were you. Independence is a charming thing; but even aunt Odynell, with bread and butter, is better than independence with an empty cupboard. Now, my dear, we will call a cab, buy a lady's trunk and some things to put into it; and then—remember you are just come from Dittisham. Come! I'll bring Cyril to see you the very first thing."

"You will tell him?" said Junia, stopping short.

"Tell him—what?"

"All about me, of course."

"Not one syllable."

"But, Anna—I understand that you would not wish to mention my private affairs to everybody—but Mr Cyril Calvert will be your husband."

"I intend to hold my tongue because of that."

"But he is a clergyman."

Anna nodded. "All the more because of that."

"But, Anna, consider what it is you wish me to do. You wish me to conceal all that has happened to me since I left Nunehead—more than three months ago! and to——"

"That is all. Not very difficult, I should say."

"But this involves deception — absolute falsehood—as to where I have been for the last three months. And it will also be as if I were ashamed of what I have done; and I am not. I have done nothing wrong," said Junia, with spirit. "You know that I have done nothing wrong."

"I cannot help feeling differently as to what you have done," said Anna. "I am quite as much ashamed as if you had done something wrong. I could never dare tell Cyril that you were on the stage. I do not know whether he would break off his engagement because of it; I think he is too fond of me to do that. But I am not going to try."

"If you do not like telling him, let me do it," said Junia.

"Breathe one word to him, and I will never see him again—nor speak to you," said Anna. "Now you know my mind," she added, and walked on quickly.

"But if he is so good—so saint-like, as you say—he will understand," Junia cried. "If one could always be sure of being judged only by good people! I feel sure—quite sure—he would understand how one thing led to another,—how I struggled, so uselessly! He would see that I could not help myself.

Surely you must see it too. Even uncle Odynell would see it."

"That is not to the point," said Anna. "How ever you came there, to be on the stage is disgrace enough. I know, though you do not, the damage it would do Cyril to have it said that his wife had a sister on the stage—or who had been on the stage. How could I be the one to injure him thus? And as for uncle Odynell, he might intend to hold his tongue; but you know he cannot keep a secret. It would be sure to come out some time or other. And then there is no knowing what violent things aunt might not say. If you could but see the matter as I see it, you would agree with me that it is a very serious one, and that I am right in insisting on absolute silence. As long as you live," Anna continued, speaking more calmly, as she saw that her last words had made an impression on Junia, "that wretched incident in your life shall never be alluded to by me—nor by you, if you are wise. It must be as utterly forgotten as if it had never happened."

Junia wavered. "I want to do right—only to do right. And it seems so hard. Give me a little time. Let me try to see things as you see them."

Anna looked at her watch. "I will give you until twelve o'clock to-morrow. When you have reflected quietly on Cyril's position—as a popular young clergyman, destined, perhaps, to rise high in the Church—and when you have reflected on what my position will be as his wife,—then, I am sure, you will see the necessity of silence. If," cried Anna, with enthusiasm, "you could imagine what it is to be the chosen wife of one so exalted above the common herd as my Cyril, then you would understand why I am so jealous lest through me or mine any blot should come on his name. Try to imagine it, Junia. And meet me at twelve in Vere Street to-morrow."

They parted; one going east, the other westward.

CHAPTER XXVI.

It would be hard to say which of the two sisters was the more unhappy after their interview. Anna crossed the road, after watching Junia for an instant, with a blending of pity and anger in her mind for the elder sister who had suffered so much, and who yet could be so stubborn in acting against her own interests. Anna had come out partly to see Junia, and partly to buy a portion of her *trousseau*—an affair which she had intended to enjoy to the utmost, and of which the most pleasant ingredient would have been her sister's company. But now Junia was gone, she felt much more inclined to sit down and cry than to go buying pretty things for herself. As she walked on slowly, in hopes of meeting with a passing cab to take her back to Grosvenor

Square, she caught sight of her own face in the side mirror of a shop-window. One glance was enough to make Anna conscious that she must rouse herself and check her gloomy thoughts. If Mr Cyril Calvert saw her now, he would be certain to ask what was the matter. Anna stopped, and looked in the side mirror of the next shop-window, to make sure that her countenance was serene and smiling, before she walked on again. She knew, or believed that she knew, that it is necessary sometimes to postpone truth ; but she sincerely desired to keep from lying or prevarication as much as possible. On thinking over what had been her own line of argument with Junia, Anna could not but believe that ultimately Junia, in spite of her obstinacy, her narrow views of right and wrong, and her slowness in making up her mind, must be brought to see that the only wise course of action was the one Anna recommended. That this course was the only one consistent with proper family feeling, Anna was very sure.

By the time Junia reached her lodging Mrs

Marville had become cross and uneasy at her absence.

"You're looking that fagged and haggard," she said, "that no amount of rouge would cover it. You won't find it pays to look worn-out when you've work to do."

"Always the same cry," thought Junia, as she set about packing her stage-dress and Mrs Marville's in the basket she carried nightly to and fro. Anna said the same thing, only Anna said it in a more lady-like way. How could the world like to be so imposed upon?

At the theatre that evening everything seemed to go wrong. Mrs Marville's temper got worse and worse. Twice the leading lady forgot to give Junia her cue; and when Junia in her turn forgot a cue, she was snubbed by the chambermaid. Everybody seemed out of humour with everybody, and the house was more than half empty. Junia returned to her lodging with a dislike to things theatrical such as she had never felt before, and a longing to be set free from them that became a prayer as she lay down to rest.

Yet when the morrow came she was not prepared to do as Anna wished. She knew that Anna had not exaggerated one word in representing the damage which it might be to Mr Cyril Calvert for people to know that his wife's sister had been on the stage. The very word was, with a vast number of good people, a by-word and a reproach,—a synonym for every kind of immorality that fallen nature is liable to. But there were two kinds of good people: one kind which was chiefly anxious to keep itself select and uncontaminated, and which did not look below the surface; and another kind which thought more of its neighbour than of itself, and which occupied itself very much with looking below the surface — just as God does, thought Junia. It seemed to her that Mr Cyril Calvert must belong to this kind of good people; and her heart had warmed to him from Anna's description. She thought she could tell such a man as this quite easily of all her doubts and perplexities; which she never under any circumstances could have told to a man like Mr

Pownall, for instance. And if Mr Calvert was what Anna represented him to be, he was the last man whose friendship she would try to gain with a lie in her mouth.

Though far from feeling sanguine, yet Junia set out to meet her sister with a certain amount of hopefulness. When Anna had had time to think the matter over, she must surely see that she had been mistaken in her insisting on Junia's distorting facts. The more Junia herself thought on the matter, the more impossible did it seem to her to tell this untruth. Look at it which way she would, it seemed a doing of evil that good might come, such as she dared not lend herself to. Mrs Marville had, on her setting out, bid her remember that she had an appointment to keep at a theatrical agent's in Bow Street. Junia did not tell her how earnestly she desired that matters might so turn out that she might never need the services of any such agent.

When Junia reached the confectioner's shop in Vere Street she found Anna waiting for her. Ordering some slight refreshment, she signed to Junia to follow her into the dining-room. She waited, though with evident impatience, till the attendant had quitted the room; then, first seeing that the door was shut fast, she said, hastily, "Well, Junia, you have come round to my way of thinking, I hope?"

Junia turned her weary eyes on her sister's lovely face. "I wish I could say so, Anna; I do indeed. I have tried hard. I am capable of silence; but silence is not enough in this case; and I will not practise imposition to secure favour. I cannot see things as you see them, try as I will."

"Cannot!" said Anna, incredulously. "Cannot!"

"No, I cannot; though anything seems better than going on with the theatre, and vexing you, and being separated from you," said Junia, sadly. "Still, my view of the matter seems to me the right, and yours the wrong one."

"It was scarcely worth the trouble of coming here only to tell me that," said Anna, coldly.

"I see danger to both of us, even in concealment," Junia continued, in a low pleading voice. "For myself, I feel that it is the best thing—even on the low ground of expediency —for a woman to have no mystery whatever attaching to any part of her life. But—put me out of the question—I still see a danger to you. What will Mr Calvert say if he finds out that you have helped to practise concealment on him? Will he—saint-like though he may be—will he not be likely to resent your want of confidence?"

"If! always 'if,'" said Anna, scornfully. "When such a time comes—if ever it does—I shall know how to act. Good heavens! what, after all, do I ask you? Very little more than to hold your tongue. If I were asking you to tell a tissue of falsehoods you could not make more fuss about it."

"I cannot help not seeing things as you do," said Junia, weeping. "You would pity me if you knew how it distresses me that we two should not be of the same mind."

Anna made no answer to this appeal. She rose and walked up and down the room, considering Junia's position from—as she truly believed—every possible point. Was there any way out of the unpleasant dilemma, except her way? Anna, with the unconfessed dread in her mind of what the Calvert family, as well as her own, might say, if they knew all about her sister, assured herself that there was not. "If I had Cyril all to myself, without a troop of relations in the background, I might manage it perhaps—I cannot be certain. I have no idea what his opinion of the stage is, and I would not venture to ask him now. If he is like some religious people, he would feel as if even the sister of an actress were contaminated and unfit to be his wife. But it would be simply because of the ungodliness of the thing; not from any thought of its being an obstacle to his own advancement. As for worldly wisdom, he has no more than Junia. Had he been worldly wise he would never have chosen me for his wife.

"If, instead of repugnance, he were to feel pity for the poor thing's misfortunes, I am not at all sure that he would consider it essential to our respectability to be silent about them. Only imagine his telling Mrs Calvert——"

Anna's heart stood still at the bare thought. Not even the fact that Mr Odynell of Grosvenor Square, and Odynell Park, and Ashdown, in ——shire, was her uncle, would counterbalance the damning fact of her having a sister who had been on the boards of a transpontine theatre, in the estimation of "all those Calverts," Anna thought. How they would blame her Cyril! No boldness of demeanour on her part would prevent that.

These were Anna's thoughts as she walked rapidly up and down the room. And mingling with these was an under-current of pity for and of indignation against Junia, who had been so hardly dealt by. Suddenly stopping in her walk, she declared that all Junia's troubles were caused by Miss Kate Smith, and that God would requite her wicked misrepresentations one day.

"What good will that do me?" said Junia, sadly. "Once more, Anna, I ask you, will you let me tell Mr Cyril Calvert about myself?

I will not seek the friendship of a good man under false pretences."

"Once for all, I forbid you to tell him a single word!"

Junia rose. "Then — I may as well say good-bye."

But Anna stopped her. "Think again, Junia. How can you be so selfish?"

"If you could see into my heart, you would know how little selfishness there is in it."

"I wish rather that you could see into mine. I am a woman of the world, if you please; but I am not a worldly woman. Heaven forbid! Junia, let us make an end of this. Just think for a moment. You are my sister; you are Edward's sister. Uncle is very fond of Edward, and may leave him money. I leave June out of the question."

"I have told June already," said Junia.

"Have you?" said Anna, in a tone of extreme vexation. "How unfortunate! What did he say about it?"

"I have not heard from him since he had that letter."

"I shall write to him at once," said Anna, "and put the matter before him in a proper light. And I shall tell him he is to take care not to mention this—unfortunate circumstance to a living creature; nor to allude to it in his letters to me and Edward. There is not a single person I am acquainted with who would not consider it an utter disgrace; and I will not have it known."

Junia was about to say something, when Anna spoke again: "Let me finish what I was beginning to say just now. Take into consideration my case and Edward's. Do you wish to do me harm? Do you wish to do Edward harm? You know as well as I do the sort of sensation that I should produce in Grosvenor Square were I to announce that you were acting nightly at the 'Theatre Royal and National Amalgamated'!"

"I know," said Junia. "They would be shocked beyond measure."

"Well, then! once for all, gather up your common-sense and have done with this miserable hesitation."

"The way you would wish me to account for the past three months," said Junia, very gravely, "is an utter misrepresentation—an absolute falsehood, with which you would have me gain a good man's friendship and the favour of our relatives. I cannot wilfully do evil that good may come. Ask me to do anything but that, Anna. And I must repeat that, in justice to myself, I ought not to act as if I had done wrong and were ashamed, when I have done no wrong, and am not ashamed."

Both sisters were silent for a moment. Anna was the first to recover herself. She spoke slowly and deliberately.

"It comes to this: I must give you up, or I must give up Cyril. I choose Cyril."

Junia's heart quailed within her, and she hid her face. Anna went on, inexorably: "Hear what I say. It is you who separate yourself from me, not I who cast you off. Let the burden of regret lie on you. Remember that I would have shared all I had with you. Remember that part of my happiness in looking forward, was that I should have a home to offer you. Remember that the only cloud to darken my wedding morning will be the thought of this estrangement, brought about by you."

"How unwillingly, God knows," Junia murmured.

Anna went on: "Listen. I have a right to dictate thus much. As long as you think and act as you are doing now, never attempt to communicate with me or with Edward. Never tell our name to any of your associates." (Junia started; for she had not thought it necessary to conceal her name.) "If you see me in the street, pass, and make no sign. Hide yourself under an assumed name. Try to forget that you belong to me, as I will try to forget that I belong to you. Hush!" she added, laying her hand heavily on her sister's shoulder. "It is you who have decided that our paths must be separate, not I. If I in my turn appear hard, it is because I must think of others besides myself. So good-bye, Junia."

Thus, mingling their tears together, they parted—Junia going first. Even then Anna could not bear to part with her sister. She ran after her and said, " If you are ill, Junia, or in poor circumstances, or if you change your mind, write to me at Grosvenor Square. And—take this." She forced her purse into Junia's hand. " I can do without it. Good-bye ! "

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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